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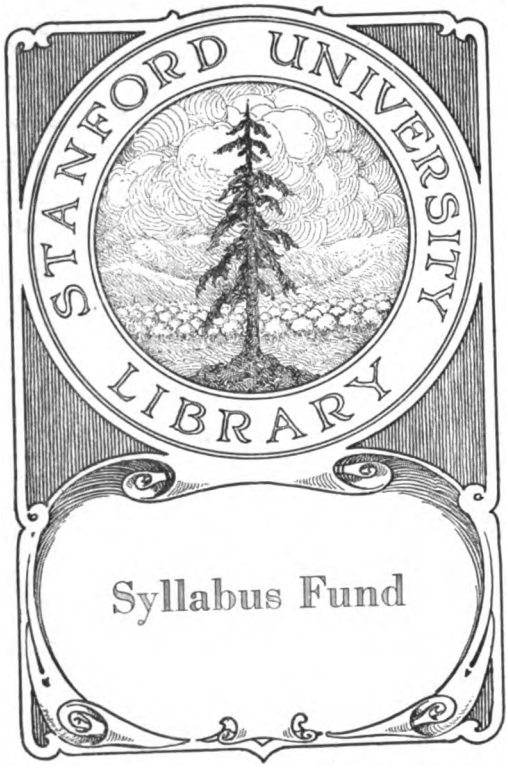

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THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

BY

FRANCIS PETRARCH

TRANSLATED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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FRANCIS PETRARCH

THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

PREFACE

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PREFACE

STUDENTS of the Renaissance and of Petrarch are well acquainted with the value of his letters and his Confessions. His other Latin writings have dropped away among things unheeded. Of the *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunæ* one may remark without a sigh that it had its day and ceased to be. It was translated into all the principal tongues of Europe and evidently enjoyed an enormous vogue for centuries. For a study of Petrarch's character and ideas it has not the faintest significance compared with the treatise DE VITA SOLITARIA, yet for some reason the latter has until recent years met with little consideration from students of Petrarch's work.

The DE VITA SOLITARIA was composed mainly in Lent of 1346 during Petrarch's residence in Vaucluse. The evidence for this date is discussed fully by Fracassetti in his note to No. 14 of the "Lettere Varie" (see *Lettere delle Cose Familiari*, vol. v, pp. 244-249). It took the form of a letter addressed to Philip de Cabassolles, Bishop of Cavaillon, in whose diocese Vaucluse was situated. Many years were to elapse before its publication by delivery into the hands of the dignitary for whom it was intended and who in the meantime was being advanced to higher levels in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, becoming Patriarch of Jerusalem and Cardinal of Sabina and filling a variety of diplomatic and political offices in the Church. Amidst all his activities, however, he kept thinking of the soothing charms of solitude celebrated by his friend and pressed repeatedly for a sight of the work. But the poet, too, had his preoccupations. Though he had apparently put the finishing touches to his treatise in 1356 (there are only slight traces of later additions), it was not until 1366 that he succeeded in getting a fair copy of the manuscript into the hands of his impatient patron, accompanying it with a letter (*Lettere Senili*, vi, 5) in which he alleges a variety

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of excuses for the delay, such as the multitude of his occupations, his natural indolence in the carrying out of an unfinished task, and the difficulty of finding a satisfactory copyist. In another place (*Lettere Varie*, 14) Petrarch also attributes his hesitation to a fear lest something in his book, presumably his criticism of certain popes for laxity in their warfare against the Moslems for possession of the Holy Land (*Book II, Tractate IV*), should give offence in high places. These fears, however, turned out to be quite groundless. His essay was greeted with applause by all and with special delight by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had it read at his table, where it was otherwise customary to read nothing but the Bible. It might be fair to assume, however, that the work did not long continue to enjoy great favor, though it was one of the earliest of his Latin writings to be printed.

Bibliographers are somewhat uncertain as to the date of the first edition, whether 1473 or 1475, and also as to the place, whether Strassburg or Venice. The second appearance of the treatise was in the first collection of Petrarch's Latin prose, printed in Basle, 1496. Here is found the division into tractates and chapters which was followed in all subsequent editions with the exception of that of 1498. The issue of 1498 is due to the enthusiasm of one Franciscus Caymus, a gentleman of Milan, who seems to have been unaware that the work had been previously printed. He tells how, during a pleasant convalescence in the country, he came upon a neglected manuscript, worm-holed and moth-eaten, whose leaves fell apart as soon as he began to handle it. But the title of the book appealed to his mood and he soon discovered that it was the work of the venerated poet. He ran through the pages with feverish haste. Believing as he did that he was its first discoverer, he could not but be pained at the blind indifference of men in allowing a work so superior to other writings of Petrarch to lie forgotten, and being evidently a person of means as well as literary enthusiasm, he made no delay in preparing the text and

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having it printed at his own expense. After this there seems to have been only one other separate issue, that of Berne in 1600, reprinted in 1605. Meanwhile there had been the collected editions of Venice, 1501 and 1503, and the complete editions of Basle, 1554 and 1581. Of these the most accurately printed was that of 1501, and it is also unfortunately the rarest. The commonly accessible editions of Basle show a progressive corruption of the text and are especially careless in punctuation.

Translators also have shown an almost perfect indifference to the DE VITA SOLITARIA. The first Italian translation, which is also the last, is the work of Tito Vespasiano Strozzi. It was made about the middle of the fifteenth century, before any edition of the original had been printed, and reposed in manuscript in the Ambrosian Library until it was exhumed by Dr. Antonio Ceruti and published in the *Scelta di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare*, 1879. The translator did not conceive his task in too severe a spirit. He often renders the sense of his original very loosely, is inclined to use etymological equivalents of the Latin without excessive deliberation, and to disregard difficulties in the text with a gentlemanly freedom. This judgment is not set down, however, with a view to disclaiming the very real obligation which the present translator feels to his forerunner. There is in addition a translation into Spanish of 1553, but none into French or English.

It may be useful also to insert here a word concerning some little dialogues in favor of the life of solitude which at one time passed for Petrarch's. The false ascription may have originated with Franciscus Caymus who printed them with the DE VITA SOLITARIA under the heading, *Francisci Petrarcæ Poetæ Laureati Epistola de Dispositione Vitæ Suæ*. It was separately printed in 1500 and again in 1513, this time with the title altered to *Francisci Petrarchæ Panhormitani: de vita solitaria dialogus*, and it was observed in the dedication that no one really supposed it to be the work of the Florentine poet. It came out in its true colors in 1581 as *De Bono Solitud-*

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inis Dialogus. Auctore Lombardo Serico Patavino, Francisci Petrarchæ Poetæ Laureati morum et studiorum collega, correctly suggesting by its title the relation of Petrarch to the composition. The facts had been stated in the work of Bernardino Scardeone, *De Antiquitate Urbis Patavii* (Basle, 1560), which pointed out that Serico was the close friend of Petrarch and "acer solitudinis ipsius æmulator" and referred to the letters in which the poet had expressed approbation of his friend's sentiments. Evidently the work had been originally addressed by Serico to Petrarch. It is slight and artificial in substance, taking the form of a dialogue between Ruricola and Civis Urbanus, the former answering the questions of the latter with disparagements of married life and praise of country solitude. It may be read in Fracassetti's edition of the *Epistolæ*, iii, 506-510.

The poverty in editions and translations of the DE VITA SOLITARIA might be regarded as creating a strong presumption against the importance of the treatise. But in recent years students of Petrarch have been referring to it with increasing frequency for evidence of its writer's intellectual and moral character. In fact it is the number and variety of the theories that have been based upon it that seem to make desirable a fresh examination of its contents. At this point it may in all fairness be asked why the present writer, whose study has hitherto been limited to the field of English literature, should have undertaken this particular task. Being questioned, he must confess that the impulse to it was quite indirect. His attention was first attracted by the DE VITA SOLITARIA in the course of a search into the beginnings of familiar moral prose in the Renaissance. Petrarch's treatise interested him as containing the germs at least of the sort of writing that flowered in the *Essais* of Montaigne, and like Franciscus Caymus he was fired with a zeal to impart this information to the world. No other method than that of a complete translation seemed available. But once the translation had been made, the book demanded to be considered on its own

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account. Its meaning seemed clear enough, but it had been distorted in various ways to bolster up one prejudice or another concerning Petrarch's character.

One of the favorite interpretations of the book is that which sees in it primarily proof of the mediæval and religious character of Petrarch's thought. Signor Giuseppe Bologna (*Note e studi sul Petrarca*, Milano, 1911; *Nuovi Studi sul Petrarca*, 1914) goes so far as to say that Petrarch does not possess any of the attributes of a modern in thought and feeling and that the mediæval religious sentiment is at the root of everything in his mind, particularly of his cult of solitude. This is also the view of Giuseppe Maugeri (*Il Petrarca e S. Girolamo*, Catania, 1920), who declares that the work shows a whole-hearted acceptance of the ascetic ideal, and of M. A. Potter (*Four Essays*, Harvard University Press, 1917), who characterizes it as "purely religious in tone." M. Henry Cochin (*Le Frère de Pétrarque*, 1903) is somewhat more moderate and speaks only of the love of religious contemplation reflected in the work, while a decidedly hostile note is struck by L. Mascetta-Caracci (*Dante e il "Dedalo" Petrarchesco*) who condemns it as an insincere piece of special pleading and as the most lifeless composition that ever issued from a writer's pen.

A different kind of misconception appears in a recent voluminous study of Signora Valeria Benetti-Brunelli (*Le origini italiani della scuola umanistica*, Milano—Roma—Napoli, 1919). Her conclusion about the De Vita Solitaria is that it is nothing less than the conscious formulation of a social philosophy, setting forth important views on the education of the individual and his relation to society. In the *Secretum*, she says, Petrarch had described his spiritual crisis; he had analyzed his malady and confessed his helplessness in the face of it. Now, in the De Vita Solitaria, he records the moment in which the crisis has been resolved; he has been freed from the evil and regained his spiritual health. His attitude toward the secluded life was determined, she thinks, by a social ideal—to cultivate himself apart from men

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for the benefit of men. The lesson of his experience was that what is possible to human nature in itself is capable of application to all individuals in all times and places. "Solitude affords the perfect way of understanding ourselves and man and God. And Francis Petrarch appears to us precisely in the posture of a man who in solitude cultivates in himself the power to embrace the humanity of all times and of all places" (35). And furthermore, he works out in solitude the reconciliation between the freedom of the individual and his obligation to society. After fortifying the home of his own spirit, he can face society unafraid. "He is at the same time the recluse and the social man; a man of pure religiosity and also a man of letters. There are no longer contradictions and incoherences for a spirit that is free and lord over itself; Petrarch has shown that they are rather so many facets of a spiritual polyhedron, single and complex at the same time. His solitude with books pointed out the possibility of making the moral destiny of his soul depend on himself, on his own free, deliberative judgment. . . . Then he was able at last to approach the cities and the people, to test triumphantly his fitness for active social life" (36). This is something more than exaggeration; it is an irresponsible flight of fancy.

Some writers have characterized the treatise in terms so general and equivocal that it is impossible to attach any definite value to their judgment. To say that it is "a living image of the man" or "a faithful image of his virtues and his thoughts" or "the book in which he has portrayed himself better than in any other," does not contribute very much to an understanding when the statement is not elaborated. It is unusual to meet with a simple and straightforward explanation like that of Professor A. Carlini (*Il Pensiero Filosofico-Religioso di F. Petrarca*, Jesi, 1904), pointing to the interest of Petrarch in the life of solitude for its conformity to his scholarly pursuits. And Gustav Körting is almost the only one who has acclaimed the importance of the DE VITA SOLITARIA in the literature of the Renaissance on the ground

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that, by the role which it assigns to the human personality, it marks a definite break with the Middle Ages: "Durch keine Schrift Petrarca's wird sein Heraustreten aus dem Kreise mittelalterlichen Denkens und Lebens so nachdrucksvoll bezeugt. Denn was ist, wenn man ihren Kern von der etwas wunderlichen erscheinenden Schale löst, ihr wesentlicher Inhalt? Doch wohl die Lehre, dass der Mensch um glücklich zu sein, keinem geschlossenen Stande, keinem das eigene Ich beschränkenden Amte angehören dürfe, sondern dass er in Vollbewusstsein seiner Individualität sich loslösen müsse von der grossen Masse, dass er in stolzer Selbstgenügsamkeit ein nur den eigenen Interessen gewidmetes Leben im Schoosse der malerischen ländlichen Natur führen und dann allein die innere Harmonie und Zufriedenheit erstreben solle. Es ist der Individualismus und verfeinerte Egoismus den der Verfasser predigt," etc. (*Petrarca's Leben und Werke*, p. 578, in *Geschichte der Litteratur Italiens im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, Erster Band).

In order to render a fair account of the bearing of Petrarch's thoughts on the purpose and value of solitude and to settle the question as to whether his attitude in this particular was traditional or independent, it became necessary to examine the ideas that were connected with this subject in European literature before Petrarch. And ideas on the life of solitude are inseparably combined with ideas on the active and the contemplative life. Here the writer found himself on an uncharted sea and drew his course amidst ancient and mediæval writers from Plato to Thomas Aquinas as best he could. A certain amount of help he did receive from Dom Cuthbert Butler's book on *Western Mysticism* (London, 1922), but it reached him after he had practically completed his investigation independently.

For the facts concerning Petrarch's life and his opinions the chief source has been the collection of his letters translated into Italian and equipped with copious notes by Fracassetti (*Lettere delle Cose Familiari*, with which

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are included the *Varie*, 5 volumes, Florence, 1863-1867, and *Lettere Senili*, 2 volumes, 1869-1870).

The translator must express the hope that the shortcomings of his Latinity will not be too grievously felt by the reader. Whenever he has been conscious of a special difficulty he has applied to his genial colleagues of the Department of Classics, William Abbott Oldfather and Arthur Stanley Pease, and received from them much cheerful and expert assistance. But it may be that his confidence has betrayed him into errors he knows not of.

For other valuable advice and for encouragement in carrying out the work as a whole, he is under obligation to his one-time master, Dr. J. E. Spingarn, and to his colleague and friend, Stuart Pratt Sherman. Finally he wishes to express his acknowledgements to his sister, Ida Zeitlin, for help in the preparation of copy, and to the Director of the University Press, Mr. H. E. Cunningham, for his valuable services in supervising the production of the volume and the correction of proofs during the writer's absence from the country.

LONDON, July 5, 1924.

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FRANCIS PETRARCH

THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

INTRODUCTION

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I. THE LIFE ACTIVE AND THE LIFE CONTEMPLATIVE

THE discussion of the life of solitude by Petrarch has two aspects. The first is the consideration of the advantages for the purposes of intellectual labor or religious meditation of withdrawal from populous surroundings; the second raises the question of the right of the individual to absolve himself from all social claims in order to pursue what seems to him the road of higher personal happiness. Though it is the first and more superficial aspect with which Petrarch is apparently concerned, the thought of the other crosses and troubles repeatedly the current of his reflections, compelling him to an utterance of sentiments which, while in their egoism offending the conventional morality of his time, announce the awakening self-consciousness of the new era. How, indeed, could he evade this aspect, since it was the one which had incomparably more than the other engaged the attention of all those, pagan or Christian, who since the days of Plato had speculated on problems of moral philosophy? The praise of solitary places might incidentally be found in the verse and prose of many sorts of men and of all ages, but no one before Petrarch had devoted an elaborate book to this theme. What was very often discussed and at great length was the relative merit of the life of action in behalf of one's fellow-men and the life of contemplation or spiritual absorption enjoyed in utter aloofness from human wants and human intercourse.

The sources of all later theorizing on the subject are in Plato and Aristotle. The former, for all his allegorizing and flights of poetry, is in this connection remarkably clear and concrete. In the *Phædo* (79, Jowett's translation), he conceives of the soul, when abstracted from the body, as passing into "a region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness," but this is not a state which it can attain as long as it is hindered by mortality. He elaborates his conception in the *Phædrus*

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(246-8) through the allegory of the winged horses and the charioteer. There he represents Zeus and the other gods, whose horses and charioteers are all of noble descent, leading a procession to heaven, followed by mortals whose teams are part noble and part ignoble. Now the immortals, gliding rapidly in even poise, soon stand upon the outside of heaven and behold the things beyond, where "abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colorless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul. The divine intelligence, being nurtured upon mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving the food proper to it, rejoices at beholding reality, and once more gazing upon truth is replenished and made glad, until the revolution of the world brings her round again to the same place. In the revolution she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute." This, be it observed, is the gift of exalted gods. As for mortals, the best of them must be content with no more than a troubled glimpse of the true being, while the greater number maintain a frenzied struggle below the surface of the true light.

Even more pointedly does Plato set forth the relation of the ideal to the actual when considering the demands of the state in the seventh book of the *Republic*. He there definitely harnesses the ideal to the service of the actual. The idea of good, he says, is "the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and this is the power upon which *he who would act rationally either in public or private life* must have his eye fixed" (517). That is why, when he has drawn the best minds forth from the dark cave into the upper light, he will not suffer them to remain there, no matter how much purer they may find the atmosphere, but compels them to descend among the prisoners of the den and partake of their labors and honors, whether

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they are worth having or not. For it is not the happiness of one person or another that is to be weighed but that of the whole state.

"Each of you," he makes Socrates say to the imaginary rulers of the state, "must go down to the general underground abode, and get the habit of seeing in the dark. When you have acquired the habit, you will see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the den, and you will know what the several images are, and what they represent, because you have seen the beautiful and just and good in their truth. And thus our state, which is also yours, will be a reality, and not a dream only, and will be administered in a spirit unlike that of other states." (520).

After undergoing the proper training and passing through the lower ranks of the service, honorably overcoming every ordeal, the rulers, at the age of fifty, at last reach their consummation when "they must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things, and behold the absolute good; for that is the pattern according to which they are to order the state and the lives of individuals, and the remainder of their own lives also, making philosophy their chief pursuit, but, when their turn comes, toiling also at politics and ruling for the public good, not as though they were performing some heroic action, but simply as a matter of duty." (540).

And so to the end Plato throws out of court the self-regarding principle and refuses to allow the pure contemplation of the true and the good to serve as a substitute for the discharge of ordinary earthly responsibilities.

It is curious that Aristotle, in whom we are taught to look for greater concreteness and realism than in Plato, should on this subject be so much less clean-cut. The statements which he makes in the *Ethics* are both hard to understand and hard to harmonize, and they have therefore lent themselves to a variety of interpretations not in keeping with the Aristotelian point of view. It is true that in speaking of the study of ethics as constituting merely a division of the science of politics and in asserting

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in the first chapter of the Nicomachean treatise that the good of the state, whether in attainment or preservation, is evidently greater and more perfect than the good of the individual, he seems to take the same ground as Plato. But in the critical chapters of the Tenth Book he uses language which sounds as though he were placing the supreme happiness of the individual in detachment from ordinary affairs. Since reason, he argues, is the highest part of man, contemplation is his highest activity. Now in happiness pleasure is an essential element, "and it is admitted that there is no virtuous activity so pleasant as the activity of wisdom or philosophic reflection; at all events it appears that philosophy possesses pleasures of wonderful purity and certainty, and it is reasonable to suppose that people who possess knowledge pass their time more pleasantly than people who are seekers after truth" (Welldon's translation, Book x, Ch. 7). There is an Epicurean drift to this which is confirmed a little further on by his description of σχολή[1] as an attribute incompatible with the military and political activities, which are preeminent among virtuous actions, but essential to the speculative activity, which is exercised for its own sake and in which "such self-sufficiency and power of leisure and absence of fatigue as are possible to a man and all the other attributes of felicity are found to be realized." The antithesis in this passage between the practical and theoretic virtues is unequivocal. While Aristotle goes on to say that a life of such perfect happiness will be too good for man, inasmuch as it satisfies only the divine element in human nature and not the material, he nevertheless thinks of it as an object of actual pursuit. "For,"

[1] "One of the Aristotelian ideas," says Professor Jowett (*Politics*, vol. i, p. cxliv), "which we have difficulty in translating into English words and modes of thought is σχολή or ἡ ἐν σχολῇ διαγωγή. To us leisure means hardly more than the absence of occupation, the necessary alternation of play with work. By the Greek, σχολή was regarded as the condition of a gentleman. In Aristotle the notion is still further idealized, for he seems to regard it as an internal state in which the intellect, free from the cares of practical life, energizes or reposes in the consciousness of truth." Quoted by J. A. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, ii, 446. The Latin equivalent of σχολή, *otium*, offers precisely the same difficulties and is of interest in this discussion.

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he says, "it is not right to follow the advice of people who say that the thoughts of men should not be too high for humanity, or the thoughts of mortals too high for mortality; for a man, as far as in him lies, should seek immortality and do all that is in his power to live in accordance with the higher part of his nature, as, although that power is insignificant in size, yet in honor and power it is far superior to all the rest."

Aristotle makes the antithesis even sharper in the following chapter and opens the way to a mystical elaboration of his thought. To prove that the practical virtues and the happiness derived from them are of a lower order than the speculative, he explains that the former are to a certain extent the result of man's physical organization and are closely associated with his emotions, "but the happiness which consists in the exercise of reason is *separated from these emotions*." The exercise of courage, temperance, justice, and liberality is dependent on various external conditions. Consider, he reflects, how incompatible these virtues are with the nature of the gods, whom yet we conceive of as enjoying perfect happiness. What, then, can this happiness consist in but pure speculation? "And if so, the human activity which is most nearly related to it, will be most capable of happiness." On the one hand therefore the speculative life would involve withdrawal from practical business, on the other abstraction from the physical conditions of human life itself, the goal which was later aimed at by supra-rational mysticism.

This is a strange conclusion for the philosopher who defines man as a social animal and regards the good of the state as the highest of all goods. Perhaps Aristotle didn't mean it. In his *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics*, J. A. Stewart interprets the speculative life as being merely "the ultimate standard" for *all* conduct, and this squares with Aristotle's opening statement that the knowledge of the supreme good is of great importance for the conduct of life, since, when we know that, we shall be like archers who have a mark at which to aim. Beyond

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that, Stewart is concerned to prove that Aristotle's idea of the Chief End "is not something which we must pass through and out of social life to reach; but that, on the contrary, it is social life itself at its best."[2] He admits the difficulty created by the language in the Tenth Book but believes that when Aristotle speaks of the practical and speculative lives he does not really distinguish two lives but two points of view, though he uses expressions which expose him to misunderstanding.[3] So too he regards the Neo-Aristotelian or Neo-Platonic views of the contemplative life as actual withdrawal from the flesh to be a travesty of Aristotle's idea and quite foreign to his concrete conception of human nature, though here again he recognizes the justification offered by the language.[4] It is well to grasp, if possible, the true idea underlying Aristotle's reflections on this subject, but for the purposes of a historic survey like the present it is at least as important

[2] i, 413.

[3] "In these sections," he says, "it may perhaps be thought that the θεωρητικὸς βίος is represented as a career distinguished from the πολιτικὸς βίος —the career of the savant as distinguished from that of the man of affairs . . . That the career of the savant was partly what Aristotle understood by the θεωρητικὸς βίος is most likely—it was his own career; but here, I take it, he asks us to look at the θεωρητικὸς βίος not as a separate career side by side with other careers in the city, but rather as the form of the πολιτικὸς βίος, that is, of all life in the city. . . . . The θεωρητικὸς βίος is not a separate life coordinate with the πολιτικὸς βίος but a spirit which penetrates and ennobles the latter. When the political life is said to be ἄσχολος, this is doubtless true of the lives of ordinary politicians, who make politics a trade, subjecting themselves to the vicissitudes of party fortune, and placing their end in its domain; but it is not true of the life of the 'good man,' whose σχολή consists in the quiet of a well regulated mind, not in an impossible immunity from the 'interruptions' of practical life. Unless we understand σχολή in this sense, we must suppose that in the *Ethics* the life of the good man is depicted as a more or less troubled and unsatisfactory public career, in which he is painfully conscious of the difficulty of finding occasions for the exercise of his temperance, justice, liberality, and other virtues—ending, if he is ever to reach the highest kind of happiness, in withdrawal from social activity, and the attainment of *Nirvana*, such as the Neoplatonists understood the θεωρητικὸς βίος to be. Nothing could be more opposed than this to Aristotle's view of life as social from beginning to end." *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics*, ii, 443-5.

[4] "It is true that in the Tenth Book of the *Ethics* he uses language which may seem to lend itself to a Neoplatonic rendering, but his object there is to abstract, and present clearly, the formal principle or theoretic element in actual life, and we must be careful not to make a 'material use' of this merely 'formal principle,' and suppose that he asserts the possibility or desirability of an actual life of pure θεωρία for man, in which the ζῷον πολιτικόν should be transformed into the θεός." *Op. cit.*, i, 62. Cf. ii, 454: "Aristotle's ideal of θεωρία is a 'regulative idea' of which the Neo-Aristotelians made a 'constitutive use.' "

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to observe the deductions, no matter how one-sided or mistaken, to which his words exposed him.

In the leading philosophical systems of the succeeding centuries the discussion of the desirability of the two kinds of life has a prominent place. The ideal of the Epicureans was a leisure freed from the obligations of public service. As Cicero reports them, they placed happiness in a state of soul untroubled by laborious business, existing in the enjoyment of wisdom and virtue and complete mental repose.[5] This, of course, was a doctrine repugnant to Cicero himself whose exaltation of the life of action is such that he is even unable to see what Plato and Aristotle mean by θεωρία. He uses *contemplatio* very nearly in the sense of study and treats it quite definitely as an instrument of social action, not as a self-sufficing end or ultimate standard. "Service," he says, "is better than mere theoretical knowledge, for the study and knowledge of the universe (*cognitio contemplatioque naturæ*) would somehow be lame and defective, were no practical results to follow. Such results, moreover, are best seen in the safeguarding of human interests. It is essential then to human society; and it should, therefore, be ranked above speculative knowledge."[6] Knowledge answers to a natural human craving, but constant activity answers to a still greater one. "Hence the abler and more accomplished a man is, the less he would care to be alive at all if debarred from taking part in affairs, although allowed to consume an unlimited supply of pleasures. Men of ability either choose a life of private activity, or, if of loftier ambition, aspire to a public career of political or military office, or else they devote themselves entirely to study and learning."[7]

These are sentiments representing Cicero's individual temperament and expressive of the traditional Roman

[5] "Nos autem beatam vitam in animi securitate et in omnium vacatione munerum ponimus." *De Natura Deorum*, 51-52.

[6] *De Officiis*, i, 153 (Miller's translation).

[7] *De Finibus*, v, 57 (Rackham's translation).

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character. They happen also to coincide with the doctrine of public duty maintained by the Stoics, whose position we may gather from Seneca:

"I am sure that our Stoic philosophers say we must be in motion up to the very end of our life, we will never cease to labor for the general good, to help individual people, and when stricken in years to afford assistance even to our enemies. We are the sect that gives no discharge for any number of years' service, and in the words of the most eloquent of poets:

We wear the helmet when our locks are grey.

We are they who are so far from indulging in any leisure until we die, that if circumstances permit it, we do not allow ourselves to be at leisure even when we are dying."[8]

But this view is too rigorous for Seneca himself and he dilutes it with a number of considerations. In the first place he refuses to accept a sharp distinction between action and contemplation. Contemplation is a form of action, fruitful in benefits to human kind. Zeno and Chrysippus accomplished more than they could have if they had commanded armies or filled high offices. This, however, is but following Cicero in contrasting the activity of the scientist or teacher with that of the administrator. In claiming freedom from public service as the right of those who have faithfully completed their term or are disqualified by the condition of their health or fortune, he but reaffirms his allegiance to the general principles of his school, for he requires the man so released "to devote himself to honorable industry and inviolate leisure, and the service of those virtues which can be practiced even by those who pass the quietest of lives. The duty of a man is to be useful to his fellow-man; if possible, to be useful to many of them; failing this, to be useful to a few; failing this, to be useful to his neighbors, and, failing them, to himself; for when he helps others, he advances the general interests of mankind . . . He who deserves

[8] *De Otio* ("Minor Dialogues," translated by Aubrey Stewart, p. 241).

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well of himself does good to others by the very fact that he is preparing what will be of service to them."[9]

But there is an additional reason alleged by Seneca to justify a man's withdrawal from public life, which not only marks a weakening of the patriotic tie but is a symptom of that worldweariness which was already beginning to infect a large part of European civilization and making the pursuit of solitude a cult. A man has good reason for retiring, says Seneca, when the state is so rotten as to be past helping. Here, too, he borrows the authority of the Stoics for an idea which may also find a certain amount of support in Plato and Aristotle—the idea that the wise man does not willingly take part in the government of any state. The state, he declares, will always be found wanting by refined thinkers: "If I were to discuss each one separately, I should not be able to find one which the wise man could endure, or which could endure the wise man. Now if such a state as we have dreamed of cannot be found on earth, it follows that leisure is necessary for every one, because the one thing which might be preferred to leisure is nowhere to be found."[10] Thus we see the Stoic as good as joining hands with the Epicurean, though he may profess to be driven by circumstances to the goal which is the ideal pursuit of the latter.

Of very special interest are the ideas of Philo Judæus about the contemplative life:—in the first place because he separates it with a very distinct line from the practical life of the world, assigning to it a purely religious scope and restricting it to a specified period of human existence; in the second place, because he definitely associates with the life of contemplation retirement to remote and solitary places; in the third place, because his elaboration of the subject frequently reveals a striking, though doubtless accidental, resemblance to Petrarch's.

[9] *Ibid.*, 243.
[10] *Ibid.*, 249.

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In Philo's exaltation of the pursuit of the contemplative life and of solitude one finds at times that extreme simplification which moralists are prone to in their dissatisfaction with the world's courses. He represents the wicked man as the busy-body; the good man, on the contrary, "is a lover of that mode of life which is not troubled by business, and withdraws, and loves solitude, desiring to escape the notice of the many, not out of misanthropy, for he is a lover of mankind, if any one in the world is so, but because he eschews wickedness, which the chief multitude eagerly embraces . . . The good man shuts himself up, and remains for the most part at home, scarcely going over his threshold, or if he does go out, for the sake of avoiding the crowds who come to visit him, he generally goes out of the city, and makes his abode in some country place, living more pleasantly with such companions as are the most virtuous of all mankind, whose bodies, indeed, time has dissolved, but whose virtues the records which are left of them keep alive, in poems and in prose, histories by which the soul is naturally improved and led to perfection."[11]

This is altogether after Petrarch's own heart, but it is not to be taken for Philo's maturest view. The latter is still in too close contact with the classical tradition to disregard the claims of the state, and too wise to overlook

[11] *On Abraham* (*Works of Philo Judæus*, translated by C. D. Yonge, ii, 400-401). Raising the question as to where living types of virtue are to be found, Philo says, in the treatise *That Every Man Who Is Virtuous Is Also Free*: "But it is no wonder if we do not see numerous companies of those men advancing as it were in a solid body. In the first place, because whatever is exceedingly beautiful is rare; secondly, because men who are removed from the main crowd of inconsiderately judging persons, have abundant leisure for contemplating the things of nature, endeavoring, as far as it may be in their power, to correct life in general (for virtue is a thing of great benefit to the whole community); but when they are unable to succeed in this object, by reason of the number of absurdities which are continually impeding them in the different cities, which the different passions and vices of the soul have given strength to, they then retire into solitude, in order not to be carried away by the violence and rush of these absurdities as by a wintry torrent." *Ibid.*, iii, 520-521. Again he refers to those who have "chosen a life of seclusion from the throng of those who are troubled about many things . . . far away from courts of law and council chambers, from market-places and assemblies. . . . For they aspire to lead a life in which war hath no part, but which is full of peace, the noblest spectators they, of nature and all that is therein." Quoted from *Liber de Septenario* by F. C. Conybeare: *Philo About the Contemplative Life* (Oxford, 1895), p. 262.

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the truth that virtue is not acquired by running away. He devotes at least one of his treatises to discussing the virtues of the political life,[12] and in the essay *On Fugitives* he deals directly with those who seek prematurely to escape from the difficulties of living in the world. The good man, when he sees the wicked making ill use of the things of this world, must not out of contradiction turn to a life of penury, abasement, austerity, and solitude, but must apply himself to the same things—"to silver, to gold, to possessions, to money, to colors, to forms, to exceeding nicety—and like a skilful workman impress the most beautiful appearance on the material substances: and perfect a most excellent work."[13] To abandon the business of civil life, to despise glory and pleasure, to put forth "their austere and dirty way of living as a bait" may be only a despicable affectation. To such as act in this way, we may pertinently address the following examination:

"Are ye zealous admirers and imitators of a life which hates mixing and joining in the society of others, a solitary and uncompanionable life? What specimen of virtue have you ever exhibited while living in the society of others? . . . Do ye despise glory? Then, when you have been placed in situations of authority, have you cultivated an affable humility? Perhaps you have ridiculed a participation in the affairs of state, not considering how useful an employment that is. Have you then first exercised yourselves in, and directed your attention to, the public and private business of life? and having become skilful politicians and experienced economists by means of the kindred virtues of economic and political science, have you, in your exceeding abundance of these things, prepared for your migration to another and better kind of life?"[14]

And then comes the critical sentence in Philo's doctrine: that "it is proper to go through a practical life

[12] *On the Life of a Man Occupied with Affairs of State; or On Joseph.*
[13] *Works* (Yonge's translation), ii, 199.
[14] *Ibid.*, 201.

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before beginning the theoretical one: as being a sort of rehearsal for the more perfect contest and exhibition." "Those," he adds, "who think themselves worthy to claim the just things of God, should first of all fulfill their human duties; for it is great folly to expect to attain what is of great importance, while one is unable properly to discharge what is of less consequence. First of all, therefore, be ye known for your virtues among men, that you may also become established by that which relates to God."[15] He bases this injunction on that which was given to the Levites, to fulfill their works till they were fifty years of age and then, being released from active ministrations, "to consider and contemplate each particular thing, receiving as a reward for their well-doing in active life, another life which delights only in knowledge and contemplation."[16] He thus goes a step beyond Plato, who even at the age of fifty did not permit his philosophic rulers to withdraw entirely from the cares of governing.

Another way in which Philo differs from Plato and Aristotle is that he does not think of the contemplative life as a merely ideal, humanly unattainable standard. The spirit of the world had changed in four centuries. Ascetic practices were developing and ascetic communities growing up. Philo had made a practical test in his own person of the higher life and had found himself unequal to it.[17] But though he had failed himself, he had before him the pattern of such a group as he described in the essay *On the Contemplative Life*.[18] This group is that of the Therapeutæ, who devote themselves to the contemplation of nature, who live in it and in the soul

[15] *Works* (Yonge's translation), ii, 202.

[16] *Ibid.*, 202.

[17] "I too," he says, "have ofttimes left my kindred and friends and country, and have gone into the wilderness (or solitude) in order to comprehend the things worthy to be seen, yet have profited nothing; but my soul was scattered or stung with passion, and lapsed into the very opposite current." Quoted from F. C. Conybeare, *op. cit.*, 268.

[18] *Works*, iv, 1-20. See Conybeare, "Excursus on the Authorship," *op. cit.*, pp. 258-358. A translation of the treatise by Conybeare appears in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vii, 755 ff., and there is one by F. W. Tilden in the *Indiana University Studies*, No. 52, 1922.

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alone, "being citizens of heaven and of the world, and very acceptable to the Father and Creator of the universe because of their virtue," enjoying his love as the "very summit and perfection of happiness."[19] To attain this end the Therapeutæ abandon towns, "because of the associations with people of wholly dissimilar dispositions to which they would otherwise be compelled, and which they know to be unprofitable and mischievous," and seek habitations that are isolated and remote, but safe and salubrious. They do not, however, live in the fashion of hermits. They make their dwellings close to one another, though not as close together as in cities, "on account of the fellowship which they desire to cultivate, and because of the desirableness of being able to assist one another if they should be attacked by robbers." Their love of solitude finds ample satisfaction, for on six days of the week each person remains strictly within the confines of his own house or monastery, never even casting a look toward the outside. Their occupation is to pray morning and evening, at the sacred shrine which stands in every house, "that their soul, being entirely lightened and relieved of the burden of these outward senses, may be able to seek out truth existing in its own consistory and council chamber. And the interval between morning and evening is by them devoted wholly to meditation on and practice of virtue, for they take up the sacred scriptures and philosophize concerning them, investigating the allegories of their national philosophy. . . . They likewise compose psalms and hymns to God in every kind of metre and melody imaginable."[20] Having thus spent six days in solitary contemplation and praise, they all meet on the holy Sabbath to hear the scripture expounded by their elders. Once in seven weeks they hold festival assemblies which are characterized by a simplicity and sobriety well according with the extreme frugality and abstinence of their daily life. At this point

[19] *Works*, iv, 20.
[20] *Ibid.*, 5-7.

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Philo introduces, for the sake of contrast, a description of the luxurious excesses of an Italian banquet which is not very much milder than Petrarch's rhetorical outburst on the indulgences of the city man.[21]

The importance of Philo in the transition to Christian ideas on the contemplative life is obvious. He was in point of fact freely drawn upon by Christian writers, though without acknowledgement, and the Therapeutæ were regarded as an early Christian monastic sect.[22] Christian moralists were faced with a difficult dilemma in their teaching. They were bound by the principles of their faith to exalt as the supreme life the one leading through contemplation to union with God. But when literally followed, this counsel meant the neglect of those human duties which were essential to Christianity as a way of life upon earth. It was the task of the statesmen and philosophers of the Church, from Basil and Augustine to Bernard and Aquinas, to adjust these conflicting claims and establish a harmony between them. We therefore very seldom find the responsible leaders of Christianity during the Middle Ages in their discussions of the Active and Contemplative Life treating the one as evil and the other as good, but rather comparing the virtue of the one with the virtue of the other and aiming ultimately to make the two interdependent.

The dual aim is concisely stated by Clement of Alexandria, who, however, makes no attempt to probe the point deeply. "A man," he says, "is made principally for the knowledge of God; but he also measures land,

[21] See *The Life of Solitude*, Book i, Tractate 2. Besides the Therapeutæ, Philo had in view the Magi and Gymnosophists, and more particularly the Jewish sect of Essenes, who, "leaving the logical part of philosophy, as in no respect necessary for the acquisition of virtue, to the word-catchers, and the natural part, as being too sublime for human nature to master, to those who live to converse about high objects (except indeed so far as such a study takes in the contemplation of the existence of God and of the creation of the universe), they devote all their attention to the moral part of philosophy, using as instructors the laws of their country which it would have been impossible for the human mind to devise without inspiration." *That Every Man Who Is Virtuous Is Also Free*, *Works*, iii, 524.

[22] See Conybeare, "Excursus on the Authorship," *op. cit.*

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practices agriculture, and philosophizes."[23] Origen is less real and more dogmatic. He declares that it would be better if all gave themselves over to a life of philosophy and contemplation, and places the few who do so in the highest rank of Christians. He preaches neglect of physical wants and social ties, that the mind may be left free for communion with the divine, and his words can be easily construed as an encouragement to the adoption of a solitary life.[24] It was not long after that St. Anthony and his disciples began to give practical effect to such teachings:

"Among the monks of Egypt, as represented by various hermits in Cassian, we find the conception of the contemplative life pushed to the extreme limit. It could not be lived in a cenobium (community), but only in a hermitage . . . Anything that withdraws the hermit from the precincts of his cell and courtyard and compels him to go out for any work in the open air 'dissipates his concentration of mind and all the keenness of the vision of his aim.' 'Agricultural work is incompatible with the contemplative life, because the multitude of thoughts generated by such works makes vulnerable the prolonged silence and quiet of the hermit's cell,' and the excitement of cultivating a fertile garden is too great a distraction, and incapacitates the mind for spiritual exercises."[25]

To counteract the demoralizing aspects of such an ideal while still allowing sufficient scope for the prevalent longing for retirement from the world was the result aimed at by Basil of Cæsarea in the organization of his monastic communities. It was Basil's feeling that the life of solitude violated the divine law of love and was injurious to the soul of the solitary in nursing a sense of self-sufficiency and spiritual pride. The hermit is

[23] *Miscellanies*, Bk. vi, ch. 8, in "Ante-Nicene Christian Library," edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. xii, p. 340. Cf. Bk. vii, Ch. 13.

[24] See F. W. Bornemann: *In investiganda monachatus origine quibus de causis ratio habenda sit Origenis*, Göttingen, 1885, pp. 29-38. The important passages used by Bornemann are *In Leviticum Homiliae VI and XI* (Migne, *Series Graeca*, xii, 215 and 247), and *In Psalmos Homilia IV* (*Ibid.*, xii, 670).

[25] Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, (London, 1922), p. 263.

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prevented by his condition from feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and from exercising humility, pity, or long-suffering. Basil therefore elevates the common life in monasteries above the eremitic life and does not sanction the removal from the monastery to what most people considered the higher life of the hermitage.[26] This general opinion about the superiority of the eremitic life was in theory supported by Benedict of Nursia who says that the cenobium is a school to prepare the monk for the higher stage of solitude. "However, he did not allow his own monks to pass over to the solitary life, and thus he agreed with Basil in practice, if not in theory."[27]

St. Jerome, in whom the hermit's fire burned more intensely than in any of the Church Fathers, also insisted on the importance of receiving in monastic life the proper training for the life of solitude and wrote with the eloquence of personal experience on the moral dangers besetting the solitary:

"In loneliness pride quickly creeps upon a man: if he has fasted for a little while and seen no one, he fancies himself a person of some note; forgetting who he is, whence he comes, and whither he goes, he lets his thoughts riot within and outwardly indulges in rash speech."[28]

And again, "Even for men there is always the risk that, being withdrawn from the society of their fellows, they may become exposed to unclean and godless imaginations, and in the fulness of their arrogance and disdain may look down upon everyone but themselves, and may arm their tongues to detract from the clergy or from those who like themselves are bound by the vows of a solitary life . . . I am myself acquainted with anchorites of both sexes who by excessive fasting have so impaired their faculties that they do not know what to do

[26]See W. K. L. Clarke, *St. Basil the Great. A Study in Monasticism* (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 85-86, 109-113.

[27]*Ibid.*, 153.

[28]Letter cxxv, (*Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Wace and Schaff, vol. vi, p. 247).

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or where to turn, when to speak and when to be silent. Most frequently those who have been so affected have lived in solitary cells, cold and damp."[29]

But Jerome is never in doubt about the superiority of solitary life for those who are vigorous enough to sustain it. His condemnation of a self-indulgent solitude carries with it nothing more than the demand that the hermit shall provide for his own wants and avoid the danger of idleness by engaging in some task having to do with the service of Christ.[30] In the letter quoted above he recommends the study of Hebrew as excellent for chastening the spirit. Of the requirement of service to his fellow-men he seems to take no account, and when directly charged with running away from the world he "confesses his weakness" with a distinct note of triumph:

"I would not fight in the hope of victory, lest some time or other I lose the victory. If I flee, I avoid the sword; if I stand, I must either overcome or fall. But what need is there for me to let go certainties and follow after uncertainties? Either with my shield or with my feet I must shun death. You who fight may either be overcome or may overcome. I who fly do not overcome, inasmuch as I fly; but I fly to make sure that I may not be overcome . . . We therefore keep clear of the crowded cities, that we may not be compelled to do what we are urged to do, not so much by nature as by choice."[31] Petrarch might well support himself by the example of St. Jerome in his own argument for the life of solitude, but it was not the opinion approved by his greater master, St. Augustine.

The preference of the solitary to the communal life was evidently regarded as a necessary corollary of the superiority of the state of contemplation to that of action. The latter doctrine was not subject to question in the Middle Ages. Even those who were strictest in enforcing the obligation of altrusitic labor made it subservi-

[29] Letter cxxx, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
[30] See *In Michæam*, Bk. ii, Ch. 7 (Migne, *Patrologia*, xxv, 528).
[31] *Against Vigilantius*, (*Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vi, 423).

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ent to the realization of mystic happiness, though they might defer the realization to the future life. Of all the Church Fathers St. Augustine was the most influential in fixing the medieval conception of the relation of the two lives. Not alone his ideas, but his expressions and his symbols passed into a tradition. In all his references to the theme one can feel the yearnings of a soul in love with the infinite and eager to embrace it, yet deeply aware of practical considerations and held in restraint by sound sense.

For his basic distinction between the active and contemplative life he depends on Platonic and Neo-Platonic writers,[32] but his thoughts draw their chief sustenance from the images which are supplied to him by the Scriptures. In the simplest form he figures the two lives to be represented by the Apostles Peter and John: "The whole of the one is passed here to the end of this world, and there finds its termination, the other is deferred for its completion till the end of this world, but has no end in the world to come."[33] With the same intent he treats the better known comparison between Martha and Mary. Both, he says, are good, but the second is better; one represents what is proper in our present lot, the other the happiness we may hope for in the life beyond.[34] But the fullest expression of his thought as well as the most ingenious display of his fancy is found in his interpretation of Rachel and Leah and of the relation of the two to Jacob.

Well might Jacob be in love with Rachel, for she is the more beautiful, signifying "the hope of the eternal con-

[32] See *City of God*, Bk. viii, Ch. 4; *On the Trinity*, Bk. xii, §§ 22, 25.

[33] "The one is in faith, the other in sight; one in the temporal sojourn in a foreign land, the other in the eternity of the heavenly abode; one in labor, the other in repose; one in the way, the other in the fatherland; one in active work, the other in the ways of contemplation; the one declines from evil and makes for good, the other has no evil to decline from, and has great good to enjoy; the one fights with a foe, the other reigns without a foe; the one is brave in the midst of adversities, the other has no experience of adversity; the one is bridling its carnal lusts, the other has full scope for spiritual delights, etc." *On the Gospel of John*, Tract cxxiv, § 5 (*Works of St. Augustine*, edited by Marcus Dods).

[34] Sermons 103 and 104 (Migne, *Patrologia*, xxxviii).

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templation of God, accompanied with a sure and delightful perception of truth . . . This is the beloved of every pious student, and for this he serves the grace of God . . . A man would desire, if it were possible, to obtain at once the joys of lovely and perfect wisdom, without the endurance of toil in action and suffering; but this is impossible in mortal life." Jacob is therefore compelled first to marry Leah, by whom is figured the action of our mortal human life, "in which we live by faith, doing many painful tasks without knowing what benefit may result from them to those in whom we are interested." Leah is said to have weak eyes because "the purposes of mortals are timid and our plans uncertain," but it is necessary in the discipline of man that "the toil of doing the work of righteousness should precede the delight of understanding the truth." When we find Jacob at length married to both Rachel and Leah, there can be no doubt as to the meaning of it. It is clear that "the possession of the lovely form of knowledge will be in this world accompanied by the toils of righteousness. For however clear and true our perception in this life may be of the unchangeable good, the mortal body still is a weight on the mind, and the earthly tabernacle is a clog on the intellect in its manifold activity."[25]

St. Augustine then goes on with amazing subtlety to discover in the story arguments which enforce on all men the duty of contributing to the welfare of their fellows by taking part in the active business of life. It is said in the Bible that Rachel envied her sister. For though contemplation, being in need of leisure and retirement, is cut off from sympathy with human weakness, nevertheless it also "burns with the desire for children, for it wishes to teach what it knows," and seeing its sister life fully occupied with work and bringing forth, "it grieves that men run after that virtue which cares for their wants and weaknesses, instead of that which has a

[25] *Reply to Faustus*, Bk. xxii, §§ 52-53 (*Works*, ed. M. Dods).

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divine imperishable lesson to impart."[36] He makes the point more distinctly in the allegory of the mandrakes which Leah gave to Rachel in return for a night with Jacob. The moral here is that the holy man must gain popular approval for his retired life of study and meditation, and this he can do only by demonstrating his usefulness. For though popular renown is not in itself desirable, it "is essential to the success of good men in their endeavors to benefit their fellow-men . . . The pursuit of wisdom retired from the busy crowd, and lost in calm meditation, could never obtain a particle of this public approval, except through those who take the management of public business, not for the sake of being leaders, but in order to be useful. These men of action and business exert themselves for the public benefit, and by a popular use of their influence gain the approval of the people even for the quiet life of the student and inquirer after truth; and thus through Leah the mandrake came into the hand of Rachel."[37] In order to gain this repute justly, Rachel gave her husband to Leah for the night; "that is, those who, by a talent for business, are fitted for government, must for the public benefit consent to bear the burden and suffer the hardships of public life; lest the pursuit of wisdom to which their leisure is devoted, should be evil spoken of . . . Do we not everywhere see men coming from secular employments, to seek leisure for the study and contemplation of truth, their beloved Rachel, and intercepted midway by ecclesiastical affairs, which require them to be set to work, as if

[36] *Reply to Faustus*, Bk. xxii, §54. The passage continues as follows: "Moreover, as the pure intellectual perception of that which is not matter, and so is not the object of the bodily sense, cannot be explained in words which spring from the flesh, the doctrine of wisdom prefers to get some lodging for divine truth in the mind by whatever material figures and illustrations occur, rather than to give up teaching these things; and thus Rachel preferred that her husband should have children by her handmaid rather than that she should be without children."

[37] "Leah herself got them from her first-born son, that is, in honor of her fertility which represents all the useful results of a laborious life exposed to the common vicissitudes; a life which many avoid on account of its troublesome engagements, because, although they might be able to take the lead, they are bent on study, and devote all their powers to the quiet pursuit of knowledge, in love with the beauty of Rachel." *Ibid.*, § 56.

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Leah said to them, You must come to me? When such men minister in sincerity the mystery of God, so as in the night of this world to beget sons in the faith, popular approval is gained for that life, in love for which they were led to abandon worldly pursuits and from the adoption of which they were called to undertake the benevolent task of government. In all their labors they aim chiefly at this, that their chosen way of life may have greater and wider renown, as having supplied the people with such leaders."[38] The sense of duty with St. Augustine ever rises paramount to inclination, however spiritual that inclination may be. When he exhorts certain monks to cherish their leisure ardently, he warns them at the same time not to put their leisure above the necessities of the Church.[39]

The danger to the Church from an exclusive or too general acceptance of the contemplative ideal inspired the treatise of Julianus Pomerius, *On the Contemplative Life*.[40] The book is not at all what its title suggests. It is an admonition to the clergy to perform faithfully their ministerial duties, being evidently intended as a protest against those vices which had crept in under the cloak of the contemplative life. In order to recommend the virtues of the active life without offending the prevailing opinion concerning the other, Julianus all but obliterates the distinction between the two. He begins by defining contemplation as the pure vision of God and therefore attainable only in the future life. A sort of shadow of it may be enjoyed on earth by those who renounce the pleasures and temptations of the world and cultivate their moral and spiritual faculties. But for practical purposes there seems to be little difference between his idea of the active life, which is engaged in acquiring virtue, and of the contemplative which, having already acquired

[38] *Ibid.*, § 258.

[39] See Letters, xlviii.

[40] Julianus Pomerius taught rhetoric at Arles about the year 500 before entering the priesthood. His work, which passes as the first Christian treatise bearing the title *De Vita Contemplativa*, was at one time ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine, the contemporary of St. Augustine. See Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. lix.

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virtue, is busy in its exercise.[41] And if any distinction does exist here, it disappears when he gives his answer to the question whether the higher clergy may properly pursue a life of contemplation. This life, he says, may consist in four things: either in knowledge of things hidden or to be, or in freedom from worldly occupations, or in the study of Holy Writ, or, what is considered best of all, in the vision of God. Now for the first and last of these, they will be obtained with incomparably greater perfection in the life to come; one may as well put off their enjoyment. The second and third are within reach of all those who despise worldly pursuits and, devoting themselves to their holy tasks, arguing with the enemies of the true doctrine, instructing the obedient, and approaching every day more nearly to God, receive here a kind of foretaste of the contemplative life.[42] One whose energies are directed to God's work may be considered free from worldly occupations, and if a priest has performed his duties in exemplary fashion, winning many souls for heaven by his precept and example, "Who will be so estranged from faith as to doubt that he partakes of the contemplative virtue?"[43] Julian is not content with the indirect benefits such as, according to Seneca, flow to the world from the activity of the scholar; he definitely requires actual mingling with society. Those who with-

[41] "The one appeases his wrath by the virtue of patience and imposes the restraint of frugality upon his immoderate desires; he is touched by carnal longings but does not yield to them; he is assailed by the vanity of this world but is not carried away; he is shaken by the devil's onset but not overcome; and submitting to God with a devout spirit, he survives the test without being worn out by the many temptations. The other triumphs by the aid of his holy virtues over all the affections to which mortal life is subject, and being free from all desires and disturbances, he enjoys a blessed peace . . . The former, by entertaining the wayfarer, clothing the naked, ruling the subject, redeeming the captive, and guarding the oppressed, gradually purifies himself of all iniquities and enriches his life with the fruit of good works; the latter, having distributed his wealth for the use of the poor and stripped himself of worldly things, hastens with all speed toward heaven. The things of the world he has abandoned to the world, and himself with a devout spirit he has restored to Christ, from whom, as a poor man, he implores immortal riches, as a weak man, to be protected daily, as a naked man, to be clothed with the garment of endless life, as one oppressed by the weakness of the flesh, to be defended from his invisible enemies, as a pilgrim, to be received into the heavenly home." Bk. i, Ch. 12.

[42] Bk. i, Ch. 13.

[43] Bk. i, Ch. 25.

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draw from all occupations and give themselves up to spiritual studies bring no profit to human society. "They act contrary to justice if, having been chosen for the merit of their holy life or their learning, they place the leisure of their study ahead of their usefulness in governing the multitude, and if, being in a position to aid their troubled Church, they seek to escape from the toil of administration for the sake of enjoying peace in contemplation."[44] Julian obviously does violence to the mystic conception of the contemplative life, but there was great need of his teaching in the church of that time.

Gregory the Great offers an eminent illustration of the feeling of the more spiritually minded members of the priesthood. A sincere votary of the inner life, he breaks out into profound lamentation on being summoned to the burdens of the papacy:

"I have lost the deep joys of my quiet, and seem to have risen outwardly while inwardly falling down. Whence I grieve to find myself banished from the face of my Maker. For I used to strive daily to win my way outside the world, outside the flesh; to drive all phantoms of the body from the eyes of my soul, and to see incorporeally supernal joys . . . Desiring nothing, fearing nothing, in this world, I seemed to myself to stand on a certain summit of things . . . But, having been suddenly dashed from this summit of things by the whirlwind of this trial, I have fallen into fears and tremors . . . On every side I am tossed by the waves of business and sunk by storms . . . After business I long to return to my heart; but, driven therefrom by vain tumults of thoughts, I am unable to return . . . I have loved the beauty of the contemplative life as a Rachel, barren, but keen of sight and fair, who, though in her quietude she is less fertile, yet sees the light more keenly. But, by what judgment I know not, Leah has been coupled with me in the night, to wit, the active life, fruitful, but tender-eyed; seeing less, but bringing forth more. I have longed to sit at the

[44] Bk. iii, Ch. 28.

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feet of the Lord with Mary, to take in the words of His mouth; and lo, I am compelled to serve with Martha in external affairs, to be careful and troubled about many things.''[45]

The reluctance of Gregory in undertaking these onerous duties is in itself proof that he acknowledged their importance. In his moral writing he places a noteworthy emphasis on the active life. The active life is obligatory while the contemplative is optional. "Who that knows God approaches his kingdom unless he has first labored well? Without contemplation one may enter the heavenly country, if one has not failed in the performance of good works; but without the active life one may not enter."[46] If not all-sufficient, at least the active life must precede the contemplative. Jacob must marry Leah before he can receive the embraces of Rachel.[47] Ideally, it goes without saying, both are required. "He is no perfect preacher who either from devotion to contemplation neglects works that ought to be done, or, from urgency in business, puts aside the duties of contemplation.''[48] The two have to be united and made to contribute each to the advantage of the other. Giving a somewhat different turn to the allegory from St. Augustine, he observes that it is generally useful to have the mind deflected from contemplation back to action, as in this way our active life is informed with a clearer

[45] *Epistles*, i, 5 (*Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. xii). Again in the letter to Narses (i, 6) which Petrarch alludes to, Gregory exclaims, "I am stricken with so great sorrow that I can scarcely speak; for the dark shades of grief block up the eyes of my soul. Whatever is beheld is sad, whatever is thought delightful appears to my heart lamentable. For I reflect to what a dejected height of external advancement I have mounted in falling from the lofty height of my rest." But what, in the course of the exercise of his papal authority, does this same Gregory have to say to others who express a longing for serenity and repose? "That rest is to be desired by us with all our heart; and yet for the advantage of many it should sometimes be laid aside. For, as we ought with a full desire to fly from occupation, so, if there should be a want of some one to preach, we must needs put a willing shoulder under the burden of occupation." *Epistles*, vii, 4.

[46] *In Ezechielem*, Bk. i, Homily 3 (Migne, *Patrologia*, lxxvi).

[47] Gregory makes repeated use of the symbols introduced by Augustine from whom he does not differ essentially in his thoughts on this subject. See especially *In Ezechielem*, Bk. ii, Homily 2, and *Morals on the Book of Job*, Bk. vi, Ch. 37 (Pusey, *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*).

[48] *Morals on the Book of Job, loc. cit.*

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principle. After the embraces of Rachel Jacob returns to Leah to indicate that the toilsome life of good works is not to be forsaken completely even after the ideal vision.[49]

There is another reason why it is desirable not to commit oneself wholly to the life of contemplation, and here Gregory alleges a psychological consideration which, in spite of its importance, seems to have been overlooked by his forerunners. It is that the mind can enjoy true contemplative rapture only at uncertain intervals and for a brief span of time. "For in the active life the mind is stablished without failing, but from the contemplative, being overcome by the load of its infirmity, it faints away. For the first endures more steadfastly in proportion as it opens itself to things about it for our neighbor's weal; the latter falls away the more swiftly, in proportion as passing beyond the barriers of the flesh, it endeavors to soar up above itself. The first directs its way through level places, and therefore plants the foot of practice more strongly; but the other, as it aims at heights above itself, the sooner descends wearied to itself." And so the Elect, being never able to continue for long in contemplation, "again let themselves out in action, that by busying themselves in such things as are immediately near them, they may recruit their strength, and may be enabled by contemplation again to soar above themselves."[50]

Finally, in exalting the contemplative life, we must not forget that it is not within the reach of everybody. In fact, the greater number of persons are by nature disqualified for enjoying it, and to many it may be actually dangerous, betraying them into grievous error. The life of action is in most cases the safer, but the important thing is to have due regard to the composition of each soul:

[49] *In Ezechielem, loc. cit.*
[50] *Morals on the Book of Job*, Bk. x, Ch. 15; *In Ezechielem*, Bk. i, Homily 5.

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"It behooves that neither the tranquil mind should open itself wide in the immoderate exercising of works, nor the restless mind stint itself in devotion to contemplation . . . There be some, who are quite unable to behold the world above, and spiritual things, with the eye of discernment, yet enter upon the heights of contemplation, and therefore by the mistake of a perverted understanding, they fall away into the pit of misbelief. These then the contemplative life, adopted to an extent beyond their powers, obliges to fall from the truth, which same persons the active life by itself might have kept safe in lowliness of mind in the firm seat of their uprightness . . . When thou art not qualified for the contemplative life by a fitting degree of discretion, keep more safely the active life alone, and when thou failest in that which thou choosest as great, be content with that which thou heedest as very little, that if by the contemplative life thou art forced to fall from the knowledge of the truth, thou mayest by the active life alone be able to enter the kingdom of heaven at least with one eye."[51]

In the centuries that followed we find Church writers like Isidor of Seville faithfully copying the language of Gregory and adding nothing to it.[52] But the movements of monastic reform which began in the tenth century shifted the emphasis in a direction opposed to these teachings. In the order of the Cluniac Benedictines the celebration of masses and offices was so increased "that they took up the greater part of the waking hours to the exclusion of all other work. And this manner of life, spent mostly in church, came to be looked on as realizing the idea of the contemplative life. . . . Owing to the enormous influence of Cluny, this became the currently accepted idea of the contemplative life in Benedictine

[51] *Morals on the Book of Job*, Bk. vi, Ch. 37.

[52] See Isidor's *Sententiæ*, "De Contemplatione et Actione," Bk. iii, Ch. 15 (Migne *Patrologia*, lxxxiii), and *Sententiæ Differentiarum de activa vita atque contemplativa*, *ibid.*, Appendix xiv. Also, *Taconis Cæsaraugustani Episcopi Sententiæ*, Bk. iii, Chs. 13-15, 21 (*Patrologia*, lxxx).

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circles, and beyond them, during several centuries."[53] A similar spirit is exemplified in the life and teaching of Pietro Damiani in the eleventh century, whose enthusiasm for the life of solitude reminds one of Jerome. He calls it a paradise of delights where the virtues breathe an odor as fragrant as the aroma of blushing flowers; the perfect way to God, since it is unimpeded by all the circumstances that tempt to sin.[54] It was a period which supplied Petrarch with some of his most authentic illustrations of scorn for the world. But in the twelfth century the most influential churchman restored in their integrity the ideas of Augustine and Gregory. Like Gregory, Bernard of Clairvaux affirms that the contemplative life is the superior but that the active must take precedence in practice; that the two forms of life should be made to alternate; that the delights of contemplation are heightened by an intermission spent in human labors, and correspondingly, the active powers are renewed and sharpened by an interval spent in contemplation. It is difficult indeed to decide how time should be apportioned between the two.

"Even a holy man feels grave uncertainty between the claims of fruitful labor and of restful contemplation; and although he is always occupied about good things, yet he always feels a sense of regret as if he had been doing that which is wrong, and from one moment to another entreats with groans to be shown the will of God. In these uncertainties the one and only remedy is prayer and frequent upliftings of the soul to God, that he would deign to make continually known to us what we ought to do, and when, how, and in what manner we should do it."[55]

In his treatise *On Consideration*[56] addressed to Pope Eugenius III, Bernard is concerned with this very question of how a religious man should satisfy the claims

[53] Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 269-270.

[54] See his *Liber qui appellatur Dominus Vobiscum*, Ch. 19 (Migne, *Patrologia*, cxlv), and *De Suæ Congregationis Institutis*, Ch. 1.

[55] This and the other relevant passages from the sermons *On the Canticles* are quoted from Butler's *Western Mysticism*, 248-254.

[56] *Saint Bernard on Consideration*, translated by George Lewis, Oxford, 1908.

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of his official calling without neglecting the needs of his inner life. The advice which he gives to his exalted disciple is both highminded and sagacious. He recalls him to a sense of the importance of his own soul without suggesting that he reject or fly from the responsibilities of his office. The title of the treatise is in itself suggestive of the moderation of the writer's purpose. The *consideration* whose value he urges upon the Pope is something less exacting than *contemplation*. The Victorine mystics were making their contemporaries familiar with the distinction between *contemplatio*, *cogitatio*, and *meditatio*,[57] and it is a similar distinction that Bernard has in mind when he says that "contemplation may be defined as the soul's true unerring intuition, or as the unhesitating apprehension of truth. But consideration is thought earnestly directed to research, or application of the mind to the search for truth," though in practice, he adds, the two terms are indifferently used for one another.[58] Later on he employs the word in an inclusive sense which involves not only the lower stages, but the final and superlative stage to which the others lead up, when the soul "retires within itself, and so far as Divine help is given, detaches itself from human affairs *in order to contemplate God*."[59]

It only remains to point out the manner in which the conflicting views were summed up by the great theologic Doctor of the thirteenth century, and we shall be in a position to know what ideas it was proper for an orthodox mind in Petrarch's time to entertain concerning these matters. Thomas Aquinas treats with equal sympathy the most diverse attitudes and attaches a uniform respect to the most divergent authorities. He does not reconcile so much as combine the views of all his fore-

[57] "Contemplatio est perspicax et liber animi contuitus in res perspiciendas usque quaque diffusus; meditatio vero est studiosa mentis intentio circa aliquid investigandum diligenter insistens, vel sic: Meditatio est providus animi obtutus in veritatis inquisitione vehmenter occupatus: cogitatio autem est improvidus animi respectus ad evagationem pronus." Richard of St. Victor, *De Gratia Contemplationis*, Bk. i, Chs. 3-4.

[58] Bk. ii, Ch. 2.

[59] Bk. v, Ch. 2.

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runners. He takes his definitions from Richard of St. Victor, his arguments from Aristotle, his illustrations from Augustine, and his practical conclusions from Gregory. Thus he accepts from the mystics and supports with eight reasons from Aristotle the view that the contemplative life is the more excellent, but adds that it may happen nevertheless "that one man merits more by the works of the creative life than another by the works of the contemplative life."[60] The claims of the active life are sanctioned if for no other reason than that it forms "a disposition to the contemplative life."[61] It is granted that preoccupation with external works may act as a hindrance to contemplation, but on the other hand it quiets and directs the internal passions of the soul and thereby serves as a help to the contemplative life. But Aquinas significantly does not stop at a justification of the active life for men of a restless disposition. Even minds that are naturally pure and restful may, he declares, by taking upon themselves the works of the active life, become yet more apt for contemplation,[62] and so, while affording a certain theoretical solace to the mystics, he definitely places his weight in support of a counsel of practical morality. That the Catholic Church has ever since adhered to this view, may be gathered from the concluding remarks of Dom Cuthbert Butler on the Contemplative Life:

"In regard to the mystical element itself," he says, "it is not to be cultivated as a thing apart from the everyday duties of life: our life may not be divided into watertight compartments; it is only by means of self-discipline in the spiritual formation of our own characters, and of the discpline of life in our relations with our fellow-men; it is only by bearing ourselves bravely and overcoming in our appointed station in the great battle of life—it is

[60] *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas. Literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province* (London, 1922), II-II, Question, 182.
[61] *Ibid.*, Question 181.
[62] *Ibid.*, Question 182.

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only thus that those most intimate personal relations of our souls with God, which are the mystical element of religion, will attain to their highest and noblest and most fruitful consummation."[63]

[63] *Western Mysticism*, p. 292.

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II. PETRARCH'S CONCEPTION OF THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

THERE is in general both continuity and harmony in the teachings of ancient moralists and Christian doctors on the relation of the duties of the active life to the ideal of contemplation. Whether from the point of view of philosophy or of religion, the two are treated as mutually indispensable ingredients in the composition of the perfect life. When we turn directly to a study of Petrarch's ideas on the subject, we become aware of a decided departure, whether for better or worse, from the traditional attitude. His approach is independent, his manner of posing the problem quite individual. In spite of the presence of much conventional sentiment, his reflections repeatedly turn away from the beaten road and achieve personal freedom.

Petrarch's purpose in the DE VITA SOLITARIA is to celebrate the beauty of a life of leisure, retired from crowded haunts and importunate cares and devoted to the enjoyment of reading, of literary creation, peaceful brooding, and the society of a few chosen friends. There is more in his attitude of Horace and of Epicurus than of the moralist or Christian mystic. It is true that some students have seen in it an expression of mediæval monasticism or ascetic Christianity, but for such a reading of the book a careful summary of the contents will provide the most effective refutation. Doubtless it will be found that the DE VITA SOLITARIA reflects the same confusion of tendencies, the same medley of contradictory ideals that is evident in Petrarch's other writings.[1] But it should not be difficult to distinguish between the revelation of a genuine mental attitude and the avowal, however sincere, of an accepted mode of thought. Wherever there is

[1] See De Sanctis, *Saggio Critico sul Petrarca* and *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, i, 262-287.

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an interplay of the individual and the conventional, of the novel and the traditional, it cannot be doubted which element is significant. Petrarch, though he may at times deceive even himself as to his true sentiments, leaves in the end the unmistakable impression that his object in writing is to assert an ideal purely personal and private.

A. Analysis of the De Vita Solitaria

IN the preface addressed to Philip de Cabassolles, Petrarch betrays the consciousness of his design, taking his cue from a saying of Cato's that men of great and unusual gifts must look with as careful an eye to their leisure as to their business. This saying he applies to himself by confessing his still immoderate desire for fame, which can be satisfied only by a withdrawal from what men call active business and by proper application of his leisure.[2] Furthermore, the sentence with which he opens Book One, while it lulls with its first phrase, prepares with its second for a more intimate revelation: "I believe that a noble spirit will never find repose save in God, in whom is our end, or in himself and his private thoughts, or in some intellect united by a close sympathy with his own." And being as yet reluctant to commit himself definitely, he continues: "But whether we are intent upon God, or upon ourselves and our serious studies, or seeking a mind in harmony with our own, it behooves us to withdraw as far as may be from the haunts of men and crowded cities." However, he cannot long conceal the freshness and originality of his opinions. Though many before him have written on the theme, he professes a disinclination to accept a guide in a subject which is so intimately wrought into his own life and for which his recent experience affords him so much matter.[3]

To illustrate the blessedness of solitude Petrarch next develops a highly rhetorical antithesis between the joys

[2] p. 99.
[3] p. 106.

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of the peaceful recluse and the cares of the busy worldling. Amidst all the artificiality of this passage one is aware in it of the emerging ideal of the scholar of the Renaissance, in which an un-Christian disdain for the unlettered rabble plays no inconspicuous part. It is with a rather awkward gesture that he tries to wrap his superiority in a mantle of religion and humility, saying, "I am not so inhuman as to hate men, whom I am instructed by divine commandment to love as I love myself, but I hate the sins of men, especially my own, and the troubles and sad afflictions that reside among crowds."[4] There is more genuine piety as well as poetic feeling in the description of the life of the solitary man from hour to hour of his daily round, taken up with the simple satisfaction of his common needs, the regular performance of his religious devotions, the pursuit of congenial studies and innocent recreations. Of Christian mysticism one discerns scarcely a trace. The virtue to which the solitary erects his shrine is the self-centered virtue of the Epicureans, and time and again the Epicurean sentiment breaks out in the phrasing. "He understands that a few things suffice for the life of man, that the greatest and truest wealth is to have no wishes, the greatest power to have no fears. He passes his life happily and tranquilly, with peaceful nights, serene days, and undisturbed recreation. . . . On one thing only is his heart strongly fixed, that he shall round out with a beautiful close the story of a well-spent life."[5] So also he speaks of "the praise and satisfaction of a soul daily advancing in goodness,"[6] and finds that the advantage therefrom "is not only in greater happiness of mind but in greater health of body and in an easier command over the movements of his limbs."[7]

But it is not only by the absence of the deeper strain of contemplation that Petrarch's thoughts on solitude depart from the religious ideal of the Middle Ages. He dis-

[4] p. 108.
[5] p. 115.
[6] p. 119.
[7] p. 121.

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avows, with an approach to cynicism, the duties universally imposed upon men by moralists in and out of the Church. The homage which he seems to offer to the virtue of working in behalf of others comes faintly from the lips and is meant only to preserve appearances. At the very moment of utterance he renounces it. The principle, he says, may be accepted, but in practice it is only a hollow pretence. "There are many who profess to believe that employment is of general advantage and holier than any kind of retirement, I know. But how many, I ask you, do we see, who carry out what they profess? There may be a few or there may be a great many; show me one and I shall hold my peace."[8] Praiseworthy indeed it may be to exert oneself in the service of others, but it is too serious a matter to be embarked upon lightly. Finding it hard to squirm altogether out of the sense of obligation, Petrarch falls back on one of his significant attitudes, pleading his own particular inadequacy in justification of his position. He professes to be himself more in need of help than able to offer it to others. "I could wish to have everybody, or at least as many as possible, to gain salvation with me. But in the end what do you expect me to say? It is enough for me, yea, a cause of great happiness, if I do not perish myself."[9] This, surely, is the renunciation not of the ascetic but the egoist, an attitude forestalling Montaigne in all but outright candor.[10]

In the course of the discursive pages that follow, the motive and aim of Petrarch's cultivation of solitude is brought home with accumulating evidence. At the heart of his argument stands the sentence of Seneca, "Otium sine litteris mors est," and this he applies to himself as to one "whose attainment in literature, while not so great

[8] p. 126.

[9] p. 130.

[10] See "De la Vanité (*Essais*, ii, 9): "Je suis de cet avis que la plus honorable vacation est de servir au publiq et estre utile à beaucoup. . . . Pour mon regard, je m'en despars: partie par conscience, car, par où je vois le pois qui touche telles vacations, je vois aussi le peu de moyen que j'ay d'y fournir; et Platon, maistre ouvrier en tout gouvernement politique, ne laissa de s'en abstenir; partie par poltronerie; je me contente de jouir le monde sans m'en empresser, de vivre une vie seulement excusable et qui seulement ne poise ny à moy ny a autruy."

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as to puff up the mind, is enough to give it pleasure and to make me a friend of that solitude in which I acquired it."[11] And so he congratulates himself on the superior tranquillity and conspicuous dignity of this retired life of his and on his escape from crowds and busy cares which he dreads as bolts and bars to his freedom.[12]

Nowhere is Petrarch's remoteness from mystic thought more openly revealed than in his comment on the passage from Plotinus. It pleases him greatly to find that the latter, in constructing a ladder of the virtues, places the political on the lowest rung, and he notes with satisfaction that very few of those who are busy in affairs attain even to the low degree of virtue suitable to their calling. Above the political stand the purgatorial virtues, which are the embellishment of men who forsake cities and become men of letters and true followers of philosophy. It would seem that Petrarch's ambition does not aspire above this level, for the third stage holds the virtue of perfect men, of whose actual existence he is sceptical, while the fourth, that of the exemplary virtues, exists in the mind of God alone, constituting there an immutable pattern from which all other kinds of virtue are derived. No opening could have been more favorable than this for any mystic yearnings which may have awaited utterance in Petrarch's soul, but instead of taking fire, he remarks in the calmest tone that his interest is limited to a comparison of the political and purgatorial virtues and that he mentions the others only out of respect for the completeness of Plotinus's thought—they really have no connection with his theme.[13]

This passage, however, is followed by one aglow with religious emotion. Petrarch loses himself for a moment in a contemplation of the truly spiritual solitary, carrying on his conflict with sin and passion and illuminated with visions of celestial peace and the expectation of beatific

[11] p. 135.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] p. 140.

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rewards. There is a possibility for chosen souls "to begin in this life to feel the delights of the life eternal." There is the possibility even of a higher transport in which one "may hear the chorus of angels singing harmoniously in heaven and behold in an ecstacy of mind what he is unable to express when he comes back to himself."[14] Doubtless this represents an honest faith. There is no reason for doubting the sincerity of the sentiment, especially in view of the personal disclaimer which accompanies it. The state which he has described in language of fervid piety is something distant and by him unseizable; his own attachment is to things more immediate: "What can I know or say about all these things, unhappy sinner that I am, dragging about with me the ball and chain of my iniquities? My love of a spot favorable to literary leisure springs no doubt from my love of books, or perhaps I seek to escape from the crowd because of an aversion arising from a discrepancy in our tastes."[14] It is with a sense of relief that he returns to a frank expression of his genuine inclinations: "To live according to your pleasure, to go where you will, to stay where you will; in the spring to repose amid purple beds of flowers, in the autumn amid heaps of fallen leaves; to cheat the winter by basking in the sun and the summer by taking refuge in cool shades, and to feel the force of neither unless it is your choice! To belong to yourself and in all seasons and wherever you are to be ever with yourself, far from evil, far from examples of wickedness!"[15]

The feeling of the last passage develops into a purely æsthetic fastidiousness unbecoming in a person of religious pretensions. Petrarch grows aware of this and seeks to evade the odium by a poor verbal shift. Being confronted in his scorn of plain humanity by the sentence of the Apostle that "none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord,"

[14] p. 148.
[15] p. 149.

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he answers, "Precisely so; you must live and die as if you lived and died unto the Lord *and to no other.*"[16] And then he takes flight in an eloquent meditation in which the language, though crossed faintly with religious suggestions, is predominantly inspired by that same Epicurean voice which is insistently heard throughout the book:

"To stand meanwhile as though on a high tower watching the troubled actions of men beneath your feet, to see all things in this world and yourself along with them passing away, not to feel old age as an affliction which has silently stolen upon you before you suspected that it was so close, but to expect it long in advance and be prepared for it with a sound body and a serene mind . . . To move about at will and converse with all the glorious men of the past, and so to lose consciousness of those who work evil in the present; sometimes to rise, with thoughts that are lifted above yourself, to the ethereal region, to meditate on what goes on there and by meditation to inflame your desire, and in turn to encourage and admonish yourself with a fervent spirit as though with the power of burning words—these are not the least important fruits of the solitary life, though those who are without experience in it do not appreciate it. While I am speaking of these however, let me not pass over in silence the more obvious pleasures: to devote oneself to reading and writing, alternately finding employment and relief in each, to read what our forerunners have written and to write what later generations may wish to read, to pay to posterity the debt which we cannot pay to the dead for the gift of their writings, and yet not remain altogether ungrateful to the dead, but to make their names more popular if they are unknown, to restore them if they have been forgotten, to dig them out if they have been buried in the ruins of time and to hand them down to our grandchildren as objects of veneration, to carry them in the heart and as something sweet in the mouth, and finally by cherishing, remembering, and celebrating their

[16] p. 150.

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fame in every way, to pay them a homage that is due to their genius even though it is not commensurate with their greatness."[17]

Clearly it is his interest in literature, the greatest of the arts and sciences, that evokes his most spontaneous response. That is the theme on which he feels and speaks with least doubt and hesitation. It is in connection with literature that he appreciates the advantages of solitude unequivocally. "Here at least I speak from experience, for I know what spurs it supplies for the mind, what wings for the spirit, what leisure time for work—things which I know not where to seek save in solitude."[18] So certain is he of his ground in this field that he is not afraid to oppose his opinions to the great teachers of antiquity, to Quintilian, to Seneca himself, and to offer advice at variance with theirs.

Having fully relieved his feelings on the love of literature, Petrarch proceeds to add another feature to his conception of solitude which again recalls inevitably the sentiments of the Epicureans. He represents his solitary as one who, though averse to crowds, is by no means aloof from the companionship of likeminded friends, who in his leisure is modest and gentle, not rude, in his retirement tranquil, not savage. Not only does he join Cicero in condemning an extreme and inhuman kind of solitude, but by degrees he is led to lyricize on the delights to be experienced by men in converse with a faithful friend "in whom they see their own image reflected, from whose lips they hear truth spoken, in whose presence, according to Cicero, 'they dare to talk of all things as though they were talkng to themselves,' of whom they have no suspicion, in whose heart there is no deception, for whose sake every toil is sweet, without whose company no repose is soothing, from whom comes our defence against ad-

[17] p. 150-1.
[18] p. 152.

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versity and the crowning joy of our prosperity."[19] His conclusion is that if he were given his choice of doing without one or the other, he would rather give up solitude than his friend. And so personal inclination once more honestly asserts itself against hard doctrine.

The concluding division of Book One is an animated rhetorical diatribe on the unregulated, unprincipled, vicious life of the city, in the course of which Petrarch, touching somewhat on contemporary manners, displays a considerable bent for satiric invective. To offset this representation of riot and turbulence, he conjures up the image of the solitary man, "content with his rude subsistence and his studies, who, though he lack much of a blessed life, at least has this considerable compensation for his solitude, that his whole year passes happily and peacefully as though it were a single day, without annoying company, without irksomeness, without anxieties."[20] For such a person there is nothing to do but shun the neighborhood of cities, since their corruptions cannot be cleansed away.

The second book, longer than the first, contributes practically nothing to the growth of the thought, but its elaborations and repetitions, its deliberate avowals and its unconscious betrayals, add to the illumination of Petrarch's character and mental outlook. No great interest attaches to the mass of biographical illustrations, though they are treated with more scholarly care and are more discriminatingly applied than in medieval literature. But the degree of discrimination is not remarkable. It is all one to Petrarch whether he is citing hermits who spent their entire life in the desert, or patriarchs and prophets whose connection with lonely places was fleeting, or bishops and popes who were immersed in the labors of the Church and viewed the peace of solitude at an inaccessible distance. Christian saints and pagan philosophers, emperors and generals, scholars and poets,

[19] p. 164.
[20] p. 180-1

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whether they enjoyed solitude or failed to enjoy it, serve to swell the volume of his argument. His personal sympathies break out only when he has occasion to call attention to the literary pursuits of an Augustine or to a personal intercourse like that of Ambrose with Martin.

Petrarch does not venture to be critical in discussing the Christian votaries of the solitary life. It might even be supposed from his expressions of enthusiastic admiration that he was in love with the ascetic ideals and practices of his monkish heroes. But no sooner are these practices stripped of the peculiar sanctity in which the Church has invested them than they present themselves to our delicate poet in all their distastefulness and barbarism. The inhabitants of the Thebaid may move him to transports of veneration, but when he comes to contemplate the Brahmans and the Gymnosophists, he regains full control of his judgment. He protests his dislike of their habit of going naked, in violation of common decency, and of their inhuman disregard of food and sleep. His own taste, like that of Horace, is for the avoidance of slovenliness and boorishness, and for the middle course in all things. "Let your sleep be short, your food light, your drink simple, your garment plain, but there should be some difference in dress and bed and food between men and cattle . . . To spend one's whole life in the open air I judge to be more proper for bears than for men."[21]

In the same casual way Petrarch continues to let his true feelings escape whenever an opening offers. He prefers, for instance, to slide as unobstrusively as possible over Cicero's affirmation that the active life is of greater profit to the state, in order to fix the attention on his less important saying, that the retired life is safer and easier, less burdensome and vexatious than other modes of life and therefore commendable in men of intellect and learning.[22] Of course he does not fail to make use of the

[21] p. 262.
[22] p. 278.

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obvious claim of men of intellect and learning to being useful. But his mind is bent on a different consideration—that of spending his life in the company of noble thoughts, inspiring books, and loving friends. How easily his words flow at the thought of these "pleasant unfailing companions, ready at his bidding to go into public or return to his house, always prepared to be silent or to speak, to stay at home or to accompany him in the woods, to travel, to remain in the country, to converse, to amuse, to cheer, to comfort, to advise, to dispute, to consult, to teach the secrets of nature, the memorable deeds of history, the rule of life and the contempt of death, moderation in prosperity, fortitude in adversity, equanimity and steadfastness in all our actions; cheerful associates, learned, humble, and eloquent, free from annoyance and expense, without complaint or grumbling, without envy or treachery." And his thoughts on friendship close with this sufficient sentence: "No solitude is so profound, no house so small, no door so narrow, but it may open to a friend."[23]

Finally Petrarch points out how all the conditions which favor a happy solitude are realized in the circumstances of the friend to whom he is dedicating the treatise by way of persuasion. He has not only the love of virtue and mental cultivation, but a sound and healthy body, material means to raise him above sordid want, a love of reading with good store of books to satisfy it, and best of all, a rare group of friends among whom he reckons himself not the least valued. Petrarch even adds to these blessings the bishop's dignified position in his community and the reverence of his people, not deeming it necessary that his friend should forsake either his calling or his residence—"a place most propitious for freedom and peace and leisure and study and virtue," and inferior indeed only to his own beloved Vaucluse. One would say that there was here a contradiction of his central argument, but Petrarch apparently does not notice it. In spite of

[23] p. 291-2.

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the assurance which he has just given to his friend of the possibility of finding happiness without abandoning his charge, he concludes by urging him once more to cut himself free from the ties which bind him to others:

"Whether," he says, "our desire is to serve God, which is the only freedom and the only felicity, or by virtuous practices to develop our mind, which is the next best application of our labor, or through reflection and writing to leave our remembrance to posterity and so arrest the flight of the days and extend the all too brief duration of our life, or whether it is our aim to achieve all these things together, let us, I pray you, make our escape at length and spend in solitude what little time remains."[24]

The trouble is that he is uncomfortably aware that the course of life he is proposing is a departure from approved doctrine as well as conventional practice. He would like to appear orthodox but cannot escape from his difficulty. He feels the force of the objections that are raised against him and protests that he has answered them, when as a matter of fact he never does anything but evade them. At one moment he tries to face it out with brave words, such as, "The truth is fearless and unassailable and does not tremble before a vain outcry," and the very next he seeks shelter under the cloak of the sceptical inquirer and in the conviction that the superior few will be on his side.[25] His best answer is both an avoidance and a challenge; he neither expects nor wishes that his counsel should be generally followed. He does not assume to speak for everybody, but only for himself and those few with whose dispositions his *unusual* habits agree. "For us, surely, if we follow not the foolish opinion of the crowd, but our own nature, nothing is more appropriate."[26] But of course it was impossible for a faithful son of the Church in the fourteenth century to close on this note.

[24] p. 301.
[25] p. 314.
[26] p. 310.

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The Christian's homage is offered in the last paragraph: "Differing here from the practice of the ancients," says Petrarch, "whom I follow in many things, I found it grateful in this unassuming book of mine often to insert the sacred and glorious name of Christ." This, however, gives to the entire process the air of an act of outward conformity; it surely cannot be looked on as a symptom of mystic or religious inspiration.

B. De Rebus Memorandis and De Otio Religiosorum

THE De Vita Solitaria is an elaborate and redundant book. Its argument winds and wanders and sometimes forgets itself altogether. But the foregoing analysis ought to carry conviction as to the secular and humanistic drift of Petrarch's ideas about solitude. It is, furthermore, in complete harmony with his expressions in other writings. In the compendium of the virtues entitled *De Rebus Memorandis*, composed on the plan of Valerius Maximus, he links *Otium* and *Studium* closely together and places them at the head of his book as forming its suitable threshold and portico. He remarks that no other way of beginning is conceivable for one who has drawn all the joy and strength of his life from solitude and leisure. He pays his tribute first to the men of action—the two Scipios, Cicero, Socrates, Epaminondas—who have drawn from retirement inspiration and power for great deeds, and then to the philosophers and men of letters for whom leisure is the indispensable condition of a happy and fruitful existence. Take away leisure, and study becomes a troubled and restless occupation, take away study, and leisure becomes a vapid and ignoble torpor. The value of either consists altogether in its serviceableness to the other, and it hardly matters to Petrarch, genuinely devoted scholar that he is, which shall be regarded as the means and which as the end.

Those who seek a religious foundation for Petrarch's ideals lay a great deal of emphasis on the *De Otio Religiosorum*, seeing in it an expression of his desire for a

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life of monastic quietude and contemplative absorption. In effect this work is precisely what might have been expected from the writer and from the occasion of its composition. It should unfailingly be kept in mind that Petrarch was no conscious innovator, no deliberate reformer of existing institutions. He had a much loved brother who was an exemplary member of a monastery in which he had himself been entertained with great deference and homage to his worldly fame. By way of compliment and appreciation he addresses to his hosts this book in which, from the point of view of a man who has lived in the world and experienced the utmost that it can offer, he describes the advantages of their position and encourages them in the dedication of their lives to the care of their immortal souls. The tone is that of a very successful and somewhat weary man of affairs expatiating to a university audience, with an affectation of envy, on the charm and spiritual content of academic pursuits which he is himself precluded by fate from enjoying. The advice is conventional throughout, the manner hortatory. In the first book he sets before them the ideal of spiritual repose—that is what he means by *otium religiosum*—to be secured by active resistance to the temptations of the flesh and all the other lures of the devil, and incorporates with his sermon a long argument in proof of the truth and glory of the Christian faith. In the second he discourses on the vanity of this life, elaborating with many modern examples the theme of *ubi sunt* and deducing the familiar lessons of Christian conduct. His precepts here are no longer applicable exclusively to monks, nor do they center on the idea of solitude and retirement. But he is a poet as well as a monitor. He cannot help being carried away by the current of his sentiments and his language, and so he surrenders to the persuasiveness of his own opinions and concludes:

"I have entertained like thoughts though I am not a monk. I have come from the world, I have lived in Babylon. O world, thou canst not deceive me; I know thee

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from experience. Moreover I have the example of a great prince. I have not been a king like Solomon, nor have I, like him, surpassed in my works all who have been before me in Jerusalem. But I have been one of those who have troubled themselves with the actions of this life and placed their hopes in thee, therefore I am at last qualified to put my trust in experience rather than in thee. For I, too, when I had been roused, and had turned, after Solomon, to all which my hands had done and to the labor in which I had vainly toiled, perceived that all was vanity and vexation of spirit and nothing was fixed under the sun."

If, instead of treating it as a characteristic blend of personal vanity and literary exuberance, we are inclined to regard this passage, or the *De Otio Religiosorum* in its entirety, as evidence of Petrarch's inclination toward a life of monastic seclusion and ascetic practices, we ought to have no trouble in discovering in his biography other proofs of this inclination. Students of Petrarch's career have, it is true, inferred a religious crisis and a reformation of life from evidence which points only to a subsidence of passion and change of habits natural enough to advancing years. But be the solution of the problem of Petrarch's religion what it may, we have in his life and in his writings—apart from DE VITA SOLITARIA and *De Otio Religiosorum*—abundant testimony to his feelings about the life of solitude, expressed with such consistency in differing circumstances, as to leave no doubt of their genuineness. It happens fortunately that the topic is a favorite with him on all occasions. We can easily ascertain how Petrarch came to embrace a life of loneliness, what uses he put it to, what pleasures he derived from it, and how steadfastly he adhered to it. In his prose correspondence, and in his sonnets and metrical epistles as well, he does not weary of describing and alluding to the charms of his life in the secluded valley by the murmuring spring with its overhanging rock and mysterious grotto.

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C. The Story of Vaucluse

IN Petrarch's attachment to Vaucluse, an instinctive passion for the austerer beauties of nature was the chief ingredient. The culminating proof is his memmorable ascent of Mt. Ventoux. No one before him had toiled up arduous hills for no other reward than the view of a magnificent landscape. We may well believe that his extraordinary sensitiveness was of an early growth. Recalling in old age his first visit to Vaucluse, made when he was twelve years old, he tells how he was transfixed by the beauty of the place and inspired with a longing to spend his life there. Who else in his time sought an æsthetic thrill in the silence of a vast forest, or arose in the middle of the night to walk alone, under the light of stars or of the moon, over woods and mountains, and even, with a mixed feeling of horror and delight, to explore dark caverns which others shuddered to enter in broad daylight?[27] That mixed feeling of horror and delight anticipates the mood of European poetry by more than four centuries.

It was not to be expected, however, that Petrarch's mood should maintain itself habitually on such a level of sublimity. There were more temperate satisfactions to be enjoyed in his retreat from day to day. The pleasures of rural peace and the more familiar aspects of nature exercised a durable fascination over him. From morning to evening he might be seen, he tells us, in mood neither gay nor sad, strolling in solitary fashion, over hills and meadows, by streams and among woods, delighting in mossy caverns and green fields, in song of birds and murmur of waters. Sometimes he arrests his motion at the river bank and reclines at ease on its grassy margin; sometimes he remains erect in contemplation, silent and with eyes fixed, communing with himself of many, many things and making small account of all earthly interests.[28] What he chiefly values is the silence. The least sound disturbs him, unless it be that of the brook rippling over

[27] *Lettere Senili* x, 2
[28] *Lettere Familiari* vi, 3. Cf. xv, 3; xvi, 6.

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the pebbles, or a light breeze fluttering his paper, or his own agitated verses producing a sweet murmur.[29]

This reference to his verses reminds us that one ostensible motive of Petrarch's retirement to Vaucluse was to escape from the neighborhood of Laura. But if he hoped at the same time to escape from the torments of his love, he soon discovered his mistake. The image of Laura pursued him there and gave him no peace. "Ill-advised that I was," he cries out, "the remedy proved disastrous. For I was but inflamed by the desires which I bore within me, and being destitute of all succor in the lonely place, the passion of my heart flamed up desperately, and bursting from my bosom, my lamentations caused these vales and skies to echo with pitiful sounds, which others thought sweet and pleasant."[30] Every sight and sound ministered to his emotion:

> L'acque parlan d'amore e l'ôra e i rami
> E gli augelletti e i pesci e i fiori e l'erba
> Tutti insieme pregando ch'i' sempre ami.[31]

In the plaintive music of his own woes Petrarch must have found a soothing relief, but even if we impute to him an extreme degree of sentimentality it is not to be supposed that he lingered in the spot for ten years in order to enjoy and feed upon the refined sensation of unattainable desire. He never makes it the justification of his stay, but speaks of it rather as the one disturbing element in an otherwise fortunate condition.[32]

[29] *Metrical Epistles*, i, 7.

[30] *Familiari*, viii, 3.

[31] "The waters speak of love, and the breeze and the branches and the little birds and the fishes and the flowers and the grass, all praying in unison that I should love forever." *In Morte di Madonna Laura*, Son. xii.

[32] *Metrical Epistles*, i, 7. It is this disturbing element which he has in mind when he speaks of the evil of solitude. In the *Secretum* he makes Augustine give him the following advice: "You must avoid solitude, until you are quite sure you have not a trace of your old ailment left. You told me that a country life had done you no good. There is nothing surprising in that. What remedy were you likely to find in a place all lonely and remote? . . . When you not only know all the testimony of the ancients, but have yourself proved all the evils of solitude, it astonishes me that you should commit such a blunder as to seek it. You have, in fact, often complained that there was no good in being alone. You have expressed it in a thousand places, and especially in the fine poem you composed on your misfortune. The sweet accents of it charmed me while you were writing." Dialogue iii, 149-150. Cf. *Met. Ep.*, i, 8.

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What more fully accounts for Petrarch's long sojourn in Vaucluse is that the spot by its isolation was so congenial to his habits of study, and the absence of distractions favored the execution of the scholarly and literary projects with which his active brain was always teeming. He has assembled a library there from which he draws inexhaustible pleasure.[33] He spends entire days in secluded corners, a pen in his right hand, a sheet of paper in his left, and in his mind a multitude of thoughts.[34] The truth is that it is the only place in which he can compose his spirits to a sustained effort. He can dictate his familiar letters anywhere in an offhand way, but when it comes to putting together a book, he must have solitude, tranquillity, absolute and unbroken silence.[35] "There," he tells us, "I began the vastly planned *Africa*, dictated many of my letters in prose and verse, and in an amazingly short period composed my bucolics. Nowhere else did I have greater ease, or a sharper spur for writing of the illustrious men of all ages and all places. Soothed by its solitude, I composed in several books the praises of the life of solitude and of the peace of the monastic life."[36] When he returns to his valley after an absence of four years, his chief motive is to resume certain works which he had begun there,[37] and ten years later, when his house in Vaucluse has been demolished and he no longer thinks of going back to it, he voices the stubborn conviction that there is no other place in which he can put the finishing touches to the work he had there designed.[38]

By combining all the allusions which Petrarch makes to his favorite retreat, we arrive at an entirely harmonious conception of the place it held in his life. A passion for nature in its familiar and sublimer aspects, his love of Madonna Laura, and his devotion to his studies and writing become inseparably blended in an attachment

[33] *Fam.*, xii, 8.
[34] *Met. Ep.*, i, 7.
[35] *Fam.*, vi, 2.
[36] *Fam.*, viii, 3.
[37] *Varie*, 25.
[38] *Fam.*, xi, 12.

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which endures to his latest day and is characteristically glorified by the distance of time. All the memories of his early years, he tells us, will make it precious to him as long as he lives. Even while he is arguing with himself in favor of the superior beauties of Italy, his feelings rebel against his reason, and in spite of himself love continues to bind him to the spot.[39] He is visited by "irresistible longings for the hills and the caves and the woods and the mossy stones amid which winds the Sorgue."[40] Long habit has made it his second nature. After the place has become insecure for residence through the depredations of bandits, he still clasps eagerly the faintest hope that appears. "I do not know," he says, "if I truly hope or only deceive myself, trying to delude with a false trust the desire which lives within my breast. It is certain, however, that the speech which day and night I hold about it with my friends and the warm sighs in the letter which I just wrote to the bishop of that region, prove that I do not cease to agonize for that place."[41] Of his whole existence, he reflects in his old age, only the years spent there merit the name of life, the remainder was a long drawn out torment.[42]

It is one of the inevitable traits of Petrarch's character that none of his interests, however real, none of his emotions, however deep, escaped dilution with a certain admixture of egotism and vainglory. If he did or experienced anything unusual, he was not content with the consciousness of being a man apart. Just as he boasts, sometimes with affected modesty, of his reputation in the great world, his general intellectual attainments, or the renown of his sonnets in praise of Laura, so on occasion he diminishes the value of his love for Vaucluse in proclaiming that by his sojourn more than by its intrinsic beauty the fame of the place has grown.[43] He suggests,

[39] *Fam.*, viii, 3.
[40] *Fam.*, xi, 12.
[41] *Varie*, 25.
[42] *Sen.*, x, 2.
[43] *Fam.*, viii, 3.

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indeed, that the desire to be distinguished from the multitude was an underlying and pervasive motive in his adoption of retirement as in all the activities of his life. The significance of the words which Augustine, in the *Secretum*, addresses to him is unmistakable:

"When you boast of having fled from cities and become enamored of the woods, I see no real excuse, but only a shifting of your culpability. We travel many ways to the same end, and, believe me, though you have left the road worn by the feet of the crowd, you still direct your feet by a side path towards this same ambition that you say you have thought scorn of; it is repose, solitude, a total disregard of human affairs, yes, and your own activities also, which just at present take you along that chosen path, but the end and object is glory."[44]

When the part played by glory in Petrarch's cult of solitude has been explained, we feel that his motives have been completely accounted for. For the eremitic ideal there seems to be no room in the life of Vaucluse. There was a good deal more of self-indulgence in it than of abnegation. At most it amounted to an adoption of a simple regime when the luxuries and refinements of the city had begun to pall. Even after the so-called reformation, when Laura was dead and he is supposed to have forsaken all thoughts of carnal indulgence, his habits were not what we should call ascetic. To be sure, he is proud of waging war against his body as if it were his enemy, but the mortifications which he inflicts upon his senses do not convey an idea of other-worldliness. His eyes do not look on gold or gems, on ivory or purple, on horses or fair women. The only woman who comes in his sight is his housekeeper, whose face is like the desert of Lybia or Ethiopia, dried up and burned by the sun's heat, without a blade of grass or trickle of moisture to nourish it. If Helen had had a face like hers, he reflects, the towers of Troy would still be standing. It is clear that his sense of beauty remains alive in spite of the or-

[44]Dialogue ii, 74.

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deal, and he has the sky, the mountains, and the streams to nourish it. As for his ears, if they are deprived of the harmonies of strings and lutes which were wont to transport him beyond himself, they find compensation in the lowing of cattle, the bleating of lambs, the song of birds, the murmur of waters. His belly he had never pampered, so that it was no great hardship for him to renounce his own white bread for the coarser fare of the peasants. Moreover, though he observed the required fasts with pious regularity, he did not disdain such simple delicacies as figs, nuts, and almonds, and he liked very much the small fishes which the stream offered in abundance. He, who used to be pointed out for his fashionable apparel, dresses now after the manner of a neatherd or shepherd, but that his conduct may shine more meritoriously he wants it understood that he still possesses store of fine clothes. And this hermit, it should be remembered, has the exclusive attendance of two devoted servants to minister to his comfort, not to mention the companionship of a faithful dog.[45]

Life in Vaucluse no doubt called for a certain amount of self-denial and physical effort. The place, after all, was not a natural paradise. Energetic labor was needed to make it habitable. The mountain nymphs were jealous of human intruders, and it was not without a struggle that a foothold could be maintained against their destructive assaults.[46] As time went on, Petrarch must have felt his powers growing more and more inadequate to the contest. Even before his second sojourn he hints that the place had become too arduous for anything more than a temporary recreation. People believe, he complains, that philosophers and poets have no more feeling than stones. But that is a mistake. They are made of flesh and blood, and while they may resist the chains of luxury, they dare not transgress the bounds prescribed by human nature. They require a healthy body and must not suffer

[45] *Fam.*, xiii, 8.
[46] *Met. Ep.*, iii, 8, 3, 4.

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from want of food and other comforts.[47] He begins to feel the pressure of other causes which he speaks of vaguely, and his old grievance against the proximity of the Babylon of the west, accursed Avignon, now strikes him with renewed force.[48] He persuades himself that as far as his work and general manner of life is concerned, he is now as well off in the city as he had formerly been in the country. His eating and sleeping and rising are regulated after the same mode. He devotes the least conceivable amount of time to his physical wants and does not permit friends and visitors to withdraw him from his books.[49] To appease his longings for nature he has a little country place three miles outside the city. So he assures himself and so he replied to Boccaccio and his other friends, when they pointed out to him the incongruity between his life at the court of the despots of Milan and his known principles.[50] But it is doubtful whether his excuses imposed on either his friends or himself. The simpler explanation is again to be found in the diversity—it can scarcely be called the conflict—of his own tastes and impulses. He loved nature in both its wild and cultivated aspects but he also appreciated the ease and the comforts which a city provided. He did not hate his body, and while he might subject it to a mild kind of mortification in the vigor of his prime, he saw no need of imposing superfluous burdens when it was beginning to feel the weight of the years. He had a taste for simplicity, and at the same time he imbibed from antiquity that sense of the magnificent which became one of the marks of civilization in the Renaissance. During his residence at Parma, he recounts in an interesting poetic epistle,[51] he began building a fine house and adorning it with rare marbles, when suddenly there occurred to him some words of Horace which recalled him to humbler thoughts and quenched his enthusiasm for the

[47] *Fam.*, viii, 3.
[48] *Fam.*, xi, 6. Cf. xv, 8.
[49] *Fam.*, xix, 16. Cf. *Met. Ep.*, iii, 18.
[50] *Varie*, 25.
[51] *Met. Ep.*, ii, 19

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undertaking. Though he goes on with the work, his spirit is all the while tossed in perplexity. One moment he is in love with the narrow dwelling of Cato and the little garden of Epicurus, and the next he is dreaming of the walls of Rome rivaling the heavens and of the roofs reaching to the skies in the city of Semiramis. The smallness of his own estate irks him and his expanding imagination embraces a vast compass, bounds fields with rivers, rivers with mountains, and surrounds the whole with the sea. Immediately it returns in admiration of moderate desires and inflamed with hatred against the arrogance of luxury. So his soul is tossed amid clouds and waves. Yet in his plight he enjoys a curious triumph, which must come from the consciousness of a spiritual experience that is exclusive. Viewing the general wreck, he declares that he is in love with his own storms. Weighing one thing with another, he must laugh at himself, at the rest of mankind, and at everything here below. Evidently he is consoled with the sense of being alive to the variousness of the world. It gives him the thrill of a superior vitality, of a more widely-embracing humanity. Is not this the clue to a richness of personality which frustrates every attempt to confine Petrarch's character within a simple formula? Does it not afford the explanation of the cross-purposes which give rise to the divergent interpretations of his thought?

It gives some sense, too, to his claim for De Vita Solitaria, that it is "a little mirror in which one may behold the entire disposition of his soul, the full countenance of a serene and tranquil mind."[52] On its face the claim sounds extravagant. Nothing can be more evident than that "the entire" disposition of his soul is not reflected in it. For the sentimental, the enamored Petrarch we look all in vain. Not a trace even in memory of the lady whose love possessed him for more than twenty years and whose image was inseparable from the spot which he describes. Instead, the mention of woman is

[52] p. 102.

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always introduced in a tone of monkish rudeness and inhumanity which belies the whole tenor of the poet's life and writing. The feeling for nature finds much clearer expression but with no such spontaneity and freshness as elsewhere in both his poetry and prose. It is more like an echo from the reading of the classics and is furthermore overlaid by the mediæval conception of nature not as something in itself desirable but only as a refuge from worldly responsibility. He is more expansive and more outspoken in the expression of religious sentiments which involve no more than a general confession of faith, but he conveys these usually in a style of rhetorical antithesis and hyperbole which is injurious to the impression of spontaneity. In respect to certain essential requirements of religious teaching he evinces a surprising independence, alleging frankly a greater interest in himself than in his neighbor,—"we know," he says, "where a well ordered charity begins."[53] But he spreads all his sail whenever he approaches the subject of his books and studies, or allows his mind to be filled with the dreams of grandeur and glory which his favorite heroes of antiquity always inspired in him. Thus by direction and indirection does Petrarch's treatise actually succeed in conveying an image of its writer's mind.

[53] p. 129.

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III. THE COMMUNICATION OF SELF

A. Self-Revelation in Petrarch's Writings

THE communication of a writer's personal tastes and character as a deliberate practice was not familiar before Petrarch's time. It is one of the marks of modernity in literature and one of the features which give enduring vitality to Petrarch's own compositions. Attention in this connection has been fixed chiefly on the *Canzoniere* as the supreme product of his literary art, yet the use of these poems as an index to his mind offers difficulties. The lyrics which contain the story of the contest between his bitter-sweet love for Laura and the promptings of his spiritual monitor were the object of frequent revision and manipulation and were in the end organized by the poet in an artful pattern to show the world his soul as he wished it to appear. Critics have therefore interpreted the *Canzoniere* in widely divergent ways. In his Latin prose, moreover, there is much that is purely encyclopædic and ortorical, entirely destitute of personal interest. Even a treatise like the *De Remediis*,[1] which was the most popular of his didactic works throughout Europe, has not a spark of real vitality. It is arranged in two books of dialogues. In the first, *Gaudium* and *Spes*, asserting the pleasures of life, are answered by *Ratio*, representing Christian pessimism, with a display of the vanity of all things; in the second, *Dolor* rehearses the miseries of life while *Ratio* acts the part of the stoic monitor. The unreality of the performance is declared by the poet himself in a letter of his old age in which, while complacent over the success of his work, he admits that personally he had never made proof of the efficacy of the remedies he had proposed.[2]

Much more of Petrarch is to be got out of the great mass of his letters. These have, to be sure, the same

[1] A translation of this book into English by Thomas Twyne, entitled *Phisicke against Fortune*, appeared in 1579.

[2] *Sen.*, viii, 3

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formal characteristics as any of his longer treatises. They are not spontaneous and unconsidered communications arising from the daily occasions of life. When he had ordinary business to transact, he employed the vernacular Italian and took no pains to preserve the record. His Latin correspondence he treated quite differently, carefully nursing it with an eye on glory and posterity. He writes letters which are evidently never sent to the person addressed, including a number to the ancient dead. Of such as he actually transmits he retains copies, and perhaps revises them subsequently. If sometimes he has failed to make a copy and one of them goes astray, he is beside himself with vexation, though a little ashamed of his vanity.[3] At intervals he collects these letters for publication and at the head of the first collection he attaches his Letter to Posterity, the first specimen, he observes, of autobiography in modern literature.[4] All this he does in emulation of antiquity. His intention is to restore the art of Cicero, whom he approaches in fluency rather than naturalness. The resemblance is much closer to the sustained solemnity and unfailing didacticism of Seneca's *Epistles*. Maxim and example are conspicuous ingredients in these compositions. Events are recorded for the sake of the moral deduction. Though Petrarch did not climb Mt. Ventoux with an allegorical purpose, in describing the ascent he found it impossible to avoid the moral interpretation.[5] His substance is frequently conventional and at second hand, as in the numerous consolatory letters of death and exile but, as he is much given to talking about himself, there emerge, in spite of much that is lifeless and sterile, in spite of affectations and disingenuousness, certain significant mental attitudes and traits of character.

At one time or other he touches in his Latin correspondence on almost every question which has interested students of his personality. He describes the tastes and

[3] *Fam.*, v, 17.
[4] *Varie*, 25.
[5] *Fam.*, iv, i.

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inclinations of his youth, of his middle life, and of his old age. More than anything else he displays his absorption in antiquity, his activity in reviving the literary and historic glory of ancient Rome. Such political ideas as he had, derived their sustenance from the remote past. He addressed eloquent letters to Popes and Emperors and Doges which those practical statesmen were pleased to receive by way of showing their appreciation of literature without paying any particular attention to the ideal counsels which were incorporated in them. That Petrarch's heady enthusiasm for a restoration of the ancient polity did draw something from the spirit of the time may be seen from the career of his fellow-dreamer, Rienzi, whom at first he warmly urged on and after his collapse coldly abandoned. But his mission was clearly not that of a political regenerator. He is in his element when discovering classical texts and judging by their standards the intellectual conceptions of his day, exploring in their light new horizons of thought and possibilities of human experience. He finds in them the courage and the weapons for an attack on the ruling scholasticism, and while he cannot be hailed as a bold defender of the free reason, he does bring to the problems of the time an intelligence emancipated from its narrowest restrictions and hospitable to ideas which were destined by degrees to reshape the human spirit into its modern form.[6]

Many of Petrarch's utterances tend to show that the mental emancipation effected in him by the classics was a substantial one. It was not a case of removing his neck from the yoke of one kind of authority to submit it to

[6] "Oltre, insomma, la filosofia dei filosofi c'é la filosofia dei non filosofi: che non sono filosofi di professione; non sono filosofi perche non sono in grado di istituire una critica dei sistemi del loro tempo che sia all' altezza degli stessi sistemi; non intendono nè pure tutto il linguaggio dei filosofi di professione. Ma hanno un motivo di non volerne sapere di questo linguaggio; e questo loro motivo ha già un valore filosofico, e un attegiamento critico. E l'atteggiamento del Petrarca ha un' importanza storica di prim' ordine: del Petrarca ispiratore e maestro della scuola umanistica fiorentina dei giovani che stanno intorno al Salutati, e che promoveranno con l'esempio e l'insegnamento lo slancio dell' Umanismo innovatore di tutta la cultura e dello spirito italiano del Quattrocento."
Giovanni Gentile: *Giordano Bruno e il Pensiero del Rinascimento*, 257.

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another. To be sure, he was given to bolstering his ideas with sayings and examples of his favorite writers, and truth always acquired a special sanction in his eyes when it could be thus supported. He loved to find his arguments corroborated by the writers he admired, but he learned from Horace not to swear on the word of any master.[7] He frowned upon the species of affectation current in his day of applying without discrimination wise sentences, or "flowers," as they were called, chosen out of great books. He valued these wise sayings only insofar as he was able to harmonize them with his experience and assimilate them to his needs.[8] And once assimilated, they are as much his own as the person's who first spoke them.[9] The authority of philosophers, he declares, cannot deprive him of his independence of judgment,[10] and not all the Greeks in the world have power to move him from an opinion in the truth of which he has been confirmed by long experience.[11] In practice Petrarch may not have been quite so defiant, but in principle at least the freedom of individual judgment is here vindicated.

The classics from which he drew his intellectual existence constituted, even more than Laura, the absorbing passion of his life. In his love for Cicero and Virgil there is less that is equivocal and perfunctory than in the homage he paid to the lady of the sonnets; there was more of constancy and devotion in the services which he rendered them. Petrarch is the authentic type of the bookish scholar. His greatest happiness and peace of mind is in reading and commenting on his favorite writers. To attempt to take a respite from his books is to incur the torments of restlessness and may result in actual illness. Pen and ink afford him a more grateful refreshment than sleep or any kind of recreation. With this dominant occupation many of the moods and interests recorded in the

[7] *Fam.*, iv, 16.
[8] *Ibid.*, pref; i, 2, 7.
[9] *Ibid.*, v, 18.
[10] *Ibid.*, iii, 6.
[11] *Sen.*, xii, 1.

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letters are connected. It certainly explains his love of solitude, of the lonely hills and silent woods so friendly to study and meditation, and it supplies the food on which his inappeasable appetite for fame is nourished. It plays a part too, though a small one, in that restlessness of spirit which drives him from one dwelling-place to another and from one part of Europe to another. At least his eagerness to see new places may be viewed as one aspect of that adventurous curiosity which impelled him to be a seeker in other fields. It is probably true, however, that his feverish craving for change has profounder roots in some congenital weakness of his nature.

By the manner in which he discusses all these characteristics Petrarch gives clear proof of the introspective habit of his mind. It is unreasonable to deny him this faculty on the ground that he does not always penetrate into the inner chambers of his consciousness. The vanities of character which he often candidly exposes are, it may be admitted, trifling and superficial. How far, we wonder, was he aware of being permeated and devoured by the same weakness which he reproaches in others? The adulation of which he was the object throughout his life he calmly accepted and probably regarded, in spite of affected disclaimers, as no more than the due of his transcendent genius. There can be no doubt that he was more sensitive to presumption in other men.[12] But vanity is notoriously the last trait which men plead guilty to in themselves.

Whatever the degree of timidity or disingenuousness displayed by Petrarch in probing his own character in the course of his correspondence, there is one work in which

[12]He once visits with annihilating irony (the passage is very delightful in itself) a correspondent who has apparently resented a lesson in modesty:

"I come now to that last and longest feature of your letter wherein you labor in a thousand ways to persuade me that my admonitions were unjust, because there is nothing that you do not know. I wish only to say that I rejoice with you that your opinion of yourself is what it is. Ah, happy man, to stand so well in your own esteem! Would that you were able and had the will to instruct me in this art of judging so of myself! For I know not but it is better sometimes to be mistakenly at peace than always to be troubled in knowledge of the truth." *Let. Fam.*, iv, 16.

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he carries self-analysis to a point reached by no European writer before the sixteenth century. In the series of dialogues which he called his *Secret*[13] he came to close grips with the foibles of his nature and laid bare the discordant elements of his psychic organization. On this occasion he dared to be honest with himself, as much as was in his power, because it was a species of self-communion and not meant to reach the eye of strangers. With the *Confessions* of St. Augustine in his mind, he adopted that venerated master as his interlocutor, and allowed him to drag forth from the secret places of his heart the flaws and imperfections, the troubles and conflicts which disturbed him in the attainment of a serene and fixed ideal. Charges against which in the letters Petrarch assumes an air of offended virtue, he admits in these dialogues contritely and almost without a struggle. He is forced to recognize that he has been vain in respect to his personal appearance, his intelligence, his erudition, and his writings, and that all his accomplishments and habits are affected by his desire to cut a figure in the eye of the world. If it were only a desire for glory that actuated him, he would regard himself as pardonable, for glory is the shadow of virtue and "whoever would take true glory away must of necessity take away virtue also; and when that is gone man's life is left bare, and only resembles that of the brute beasts that follow headlong after their appetite, which to them is the only law."[14] But his worldliness takes more degrading forms, expressing itself in "the desire of things temporal," in immoderate craving for ease and material comforts, and even in fleshly lusts.[15] In acknowledging these feelings Petrarch's ethical attitude is unequivocal. But his tone is much more dubious when he comes to speak of his love for Laura. Here his instinct accuses him of no sin. He calls it the finest passion of his nature, the clearest faculty of his soul; neither the object of his love

[13]Sometimes also referred to as *On the Contempt of the World* and *Confessions*. The English translation by William H. Draper, from which quotations are here made, is entitled *Petrarch's Secret or the Soul's Conflict with Passion*, London, 1911.

[14]Dialogue iii, p. 182.

[15]Dialogue iii, p. 60.

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nor the manner of it has caused him any shame. What greater blessing can there be than to love one who is the image of virtue?[16] Augustine has no suitable reply other than to propose all the classical remedies for the cure of love, and when Petrarch yields it is not to the pressure of conscience compelling him from within, but to the dead hand of a tradition whose weight he is powerless to shake off.

This suggests the important difference between Petrarch's Confessions and Augustine's. The latter describes the stages in a spiritual struggle, culminating in a definite crisis which brings about the final defeat of the evil forces and the triumph of the good, the end of trouble and the beginning of peace. The same peace and assurance constitute also Petrarch's *summum bonum* but he lives a century too late. The comfortable shell in which the human spirit had been encased is broken. A new sun is shining and fresh winds are blowing. The poet feels their invigorating thrill but believes he has not the right to enjoy them. Responding to the sweet call of life, he is bidden by his monitor to contemplate death. He longs to find joy here and happiness hereafter but his creed fails to reconcile the twofold craving. There arises a discomfort which he knows precisely how to describe:

"With no considered plan, you (the words are put into Augustine's mouth) are tossed now here, now there in strange fluctuation, and can never put your whole strength to anything . . . and then comes to pass that inner discord and that worrying torment of a mind angry with itself; when it loathes its own defilements, yet cleanses them not away; sees the crooked paths, yet does not forsake them; dreads the impending danger, yet stirs not a step to avoid it."[17]

It develops into that melancholy obsession to which, adopting the explanation of his time, he gives the name of *acedia*:

[16] Dialogue iii, p. 109.
[17] Dialogue i, p. 45.

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"Though in almost all other diseases which torment me there is mingled a certain false delight, in this wretched state everything is harsh, gloomy, frightful. The way to despair is forever open, and everything goads one's miserable soul to self-destruction. Moreover, while other passions attack me only in bouts, which, though frequent, are but short and for a moment, this one usually has invested me so closely that it clings to and tortures me for whole days and nights together. In such times I take no pleasure in the light of day, I see nothing, I am as one plunged in the darkness of hell itself, and seem to endure death in its most cruel form. But what one may call the climax of the misery is, that I so feed upon my tears and sufferings with a morbid attraction that I can only be rescued from it by main force and in despite of myself."[18]

When Petrarch goes on to trace the causes of this melancholy in a vague way to discontent with life in general and the state of his own fortune in particular, we may not feel that he is displaying great penetration, but to have achieved as much as is here indicated makes him remarkable among his contemporaries. He shows that self-knowledge which is the beginning of wisdom, if not the end of it. "There is in men," he says, "a certain perverse and dangerous inclination to deceive themselves, which is the most deadly thing in life."[19] In his own case he carried the understanding of self far enough to enable him to expose that malady which was significant of the new perturbation of the human outlook. Significant too is the inconclusiveness of his self-examination, for it does not appear that he has cleared his troubles through his confession. The victory carried off by the abstract principles against his living impulses is in the end a doubtful one.

[18]Dialogue ii, p. 84.
[19]Dialogue i, p. 15.

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B. Self-Realization in the De Vita Solitaria

THE De Vita Solitaria may not contain as much deliberate self-analysis or direct confession as is to be found in other writings of Petrarch, but a distinctive interest attaches to it for asserting as a principle the right of the human personality to express and realize itself according to its individual qualities. The book thus acquires something of a philosophical import as marking a stage in the development of the European mind. If there is an important idea in the book, it is neither more nor less than the establishment of self-cultivation as an adequate guiding motive in life. This is indirectly apparent in the treatment of the numerous examples that constitute Book Two. Ostensibly they all illustrate the virtue of the solitary life; in reality they represent the most disparate human tendencies and are linked together by solitude only insofar as that affords them the opportunity for the fulfilment of their separate desires. Each person, whether saint, soldier, or philosopher, follows some irresistible call of his nature.

With some it is a craving for poetic reverie, with others the pursuit of a scholarly interest. Many of his heroes withdraw themselves completely from human contact, others spend their lives in unwearied activity among men. While he commends some for relinquishing the world in favor of solitude,[20] he often makes it a merit of solitude that it procured for its votaries earthly dignities and power. With little regard for superficial consistency he holds up to admiration the solitary life of Silvester as being the origin of the temporal magnificence represented by the papacy,[21] while elsewhere he exalts the humility of Celestinus in resigning papal powers.[22] The contradictions meet in the single person of Peter Damianus who was prepared by solitude for the exercise of temporal power and later

[20] p. 187ff.
[21] p. 203.
[22] p. 232ff.

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returned again to his former way of life, thereby representing in himself the "twofold honor" of solitude which fits such men for the world and later receives them back.[23] Furthermore, solitude rewards its followers with the crown of earthly fame, the prize which, though so little in keeping with the occasion, Petrarch could never lose from sight. St. Anthony, striving to hide himself from the world's eye, procures a glory coextensive with Christendom, and Hilarion, as he runs from one refuge to another, finds himself always outdistanced by the reputation of his life.[24]

All this, however, is but an unconscious betrayal of the conflicting impulses and interests obscurely striving for recognition in Petrarch's utterance, and shows that the motive of self-realization colors more or less obscurely the general thought of the book. Specifically, however, the life of solitude is recommended as meeting the needs of the student and the man of letters, and even more specifically of that particular student and man of letters known as Francis Petrarch. The argument takes shape finally not as an ordinary didactic plea, a counsel of perfection to be generally applied, but as a vindication of the right of a particular individual to regulate his life according to the disposition and humor with which nature has endowed him and without any reference to the claims of his fellowmen upon him. In no moral treatise before this do we find the writer's own experience and character made the ground of a plea for the human personality. It is a step in the liberation of the modern man from the bondage of an absolute moral code. It adumbrates the point of view of Montaigne, preceding the *Essais* by more than two centuries.

At bottom, then, Petrarch vindicates his choice of solitude as a private matter. He adopts that mode of life because such is his pleasure. His attitude is decided not so much by a deliberate resolve of his own or the advice of

[23] p. 231.
[24] p. 192-3

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others, as by a natural prompting of his disposition.[25] All his tastes, habits, and education have conspired to make leisure and retirement especially grateful. "My love of a spot favorable to literary leisure," he says, "springs no doubt from my love of books, or perhaps I seek to escape from the crowd because of an aversion arising from a discrepancy in our tastes, or it may even be that from a squeamishness of conscience I like to avoid a many-tongued witness of my life."[26] From a conviction thus instinctively held not even the venerated authority of the classics can move him. He may not be successful in reconciling his practice with the precepts of Demosthenes and Quintilian, but precepts are for the plodding and unimaginative, the industrious compilers and chroniclers of fact. Poets and philosophers, of whose fellowship he is, must be left to their own devices. "Let them follow the impulse of their genius, in the assurance that their mind will respond; no matter where place and time invite them, wherever they feel themselves strongly incited by the goad of their inspiration, whether it be under the open sky or the roof of a locked house, within the shelter of a solid rock or beneath the shade of a spreading pine. . . . They raise themselves aloft on the wings of their genius, for they must needs be carried away with more than human rapture if they would speak with more than human power. This, I have observed, is without doubt achieved most effectively and happily in free and open places. Wherefore I have often looked upon a mountain-song as if it were a frolicking goat, the gayest and choicest in the whole flock, and being reminded of its origin by its native grace, I have said to myself,

> 'Thou hast tasted the grass of the Alps, thou comest from above.' "[27]

It is not a matter, Petrarch is anxious to make it clear, of opposing his own wisdom to that of another. He but

[25] p. 135.
[26] p. 148.
[27] p. 157-8

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adds his observation and experience to the common stock. Whatever anyone may say, he knows that his own mind works nowhere more happily than in the woods and mountains, nowhere do great thoughts occur to him more readily or words rise up so adequate to his ideas.[28] At the very outset he announces his purpose to take only his experience for guide in his treatment of the subject, neither seeking any other leader nor disposed to receive one if he offered himself, and drawing his material from the past and present tenor of his life. "For," he remarks, "it is with a freer step, though perchance a less secure one, that I pursue my own route than I follow the traces of a stranger. You shall learn more from those who have had a greater experience than I or who have searched further into the experience of others; from me you shall only hear whatever the moment may suggest."[29] The only advice he has to offer to those readers who may be puzzled by conflicting counsels is to examine the truth of the statement for themselves, not to feel bound to take him or anyone else on faith but trust to the evidence of their own experience.[30]

It follows from this, and Petrarch does not hesitate to draw the inference, that the life which to him appeals as supremely desirable is not to be recommended for general imitation.[31] He is intent upon emphasizing that his persuasion is addressed only to the chosen few that are capable of sympathizing with him. He does not propose a rule for others but exposes the principles of his own mind. "If it commends itself to any one, let him follow its suggestion. Whoever does not like it is free to reject it,

[28] p. 156.
[29] p. 106-7.
[30] p. 159.
[31] M. Giuseppe Bologna (*Nuovi Studi sul Petrarca*, p. 60) makes it the chief reproach of the DE VITA SOLITARIA that its ideal is too narrowly personal, and by its unfitness for general application incomplete and superficial, proving by this judgment how entirely he has overlooked the most significant feature of Petrarch's thought. Far from offering his ideal for universal acceptance, Petrarch insists on its special appeal to himself and a few other congenial minds and then goes on to make this observation the basis of a plea for freedom for each individual to shape his way of living in agreement with his peculiar temperament and the requirements of his nature.

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and leaving us to our solitude, to embrace his own anxious cares and live to his own satisfaction in scorn of our rural retreat."[32] The important thing in this connection is for every person to understand the needs of his nature and to adopt a course of life in keeping with it. To follow a road merely because it is pleasant and alluring is likely to bring one into danger. Fashion, emulation, what the world esteems, are all likely to carry men in a wrong direction. Therefore, self-examination becomes a duty and a necessity, "a man must be honest and exacting in passing judgment on himself and not subject to be led astray by the delusive temptation of eye and ear."[33] Petrarch has evidently rediscovered the precept of the Delphian oracle and several times repeats in almost uniform language the admonition of the old philosophers "that each man should note the relation between his own character and habits and a given mode of life, whether it be the retired life, or life in the city, or any other manner of life, and understand which kind is best suited for himself."[34] "My counsel to other men," he assures us, "to take account of their condition is precisely what I have employed in arriving at an understanding of my own."[35]

This liberation from conventionalized conceptions of behavior, the toleration of differences in personal outlook and temperament, the recognition of the right of the individual to realize life in accordance with a subjective principle, have perhaps been fully enough conveyed in the passages already cited. But there are certain others which even more surprisingly testify to the freshness of spirit which Petrarch brought to the writing of his moral essay. For one thing, he proclaims in so many words that there is nothing more vital than independence of judgment, that he claims it for himself and does not deny it to others. But if this does not seem particularly significant, there is

[32] p. 130.
[33] p. 134.
[34] p. 135.
[35] *Ibid.*

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surely the manifestation of a new temper in the laying aside of the magisterial toga, in the renunciation of the right to pass judgment at all on the ground that "there is no compulsion by which indefinite and wavering opinion can be reduced to positive truth."[36] The same spirit flashes out in his saying, "I would not constitute myself the judge of the deep and hidden mysteries of the human conscience."[37] Petrarch is a sceptic in the making. As he brings his treatise to a close, he describes himself as a painstaking inquirer who has diligently sought the truth yet fears that it has sometimes escaped him because of his human limitations. "Therefore," he adds, "I have treated these matters not in the spirit of one who lays down the law but as a student and investigator. I am neither wise nor neighbor to the wise, but in Cicero's words, a man fertile in conjecture."[38] It would be too much to affirm that the book as a whole maintains itself on this level. Yet even when regarded independently of the context, the value of these statements is unmistakable. They mark the birth of the free examination of human character and behavior. By calling attention to the conflict of individual tastes and inclinations, they at least hint at the relaxation of standards of morality grown too rigid. By bringing into light the discrepancy between individual opinions, they insinuate a greater flexibility in viewing truth. These approaches toward the liberation of the modern spirit are not made so explicitly in any other writings of Petrarch. Elsewhere he gives fuller expression to his individual emotions, elsewhere he goes more deeply into the analysis of his moods, but in the DE VITA SOLITARIA he comes closest to announcing in philosophical terms principles which have governed the expansion of the human intelligence in Europe since his day.

[36] p. 315.
[37] p. 139.
[38] p. 315.

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IV. LITERARY FORM OF DE VITA SOLITARIA

VIEWED purely as literature, this treatise calls for a good measure of indulgence. In structure it is vagrant and uncouth. The first book contains the whole argument within itself, not without considerable divagation and repetition; the second and longer book is added to reinforce the general reasoning of the first by means of examples and is further expanded with digressions and an elaborate coda. The biographies are piled up beyond the utmost requirements of illustration. Petrarch doubtless thought them worth while for their own sake and apparently devoted a good deal of pains to their composition. In some cases we find him conducting patient research into the facts and weighing rival authorities with great care. But the modern reader can scarcely be expected to share the interest which his contemporaries may have felt in these details.

There is less need of apology for the digressions which swell the volume of his writing, for aside from their superior intrinsic interest they are inherent in the literary approach and symptomatic of the spirit of the composition. Since the treatise is the elaboration of a letter addressed to a personal friend, there is nothing improper in making it the receptacle of whatever opinions, reflections, and experiences occur spontaneously to the writer. The demands of unity and economy are not rigorously felt, are in point of fact subordinated to freedom of flow. The outpouring of the riches of the author's speculation and fancy is the end and justification of the performance. We have in this another resemblance, hardly accidental, to the manner of Montaigne. The Frenchman, when he wrote his *Essais*, thought of them as loose, familiar letters, though the friend to whom he would address them was no longer living, and he exposed in them all the resources of his active brain as well as the intimate habits of his daily existence. Petrarch, too, deliberately employed the epistolary form, and so fell into the same practices of free di-

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gression and personal communication. Without knowing the word, perhaps without intending the thing, he wrote an essay. But intentional or not, a number of the characteristic features of the essay are unmistakably present in the DE VITA SOLITARIA.

Petrarch avails himself of every slight provocation to expatiate on some of his favorite topics. A reference to Peter the Hermit is enough to launch him on a long invective against the rulers of Christendom for their neglect of the Holy Land, accompanied by a train of gloomy reflections on the decay of the Christian spirit and the decline of the power and prestige of Christianity. He is often prompted to unburden himself of general censures on the degeneracy of his age, on its proneness to indulge all vices and to ignore noble precepts. On such occasions he falls into rhetorical declamation, particularly if the vice which he reproaches is one whose temptations he has not himself escaped—avarice, let us say. While these passages illumine the writer's character with only an indirect light, there are others in which he speaks of his tastes and feelings with a more personal utterance, revealing a spirit of vainglory and egotism which are of the essence of the humanistic temper. And his style, always fluent, kindles at intervals into an eloquent glow which must penetrate to the heart of every reader who has felt the charm of books and congenial companionship and serene meditation. Himself under the spell of Cicero and Horace, he sometimes attains their friendliness of manner. It seems as if he only needed a conscious formulation of his method to anticipate the discovery of Montaigne's genre. The ingredients are all there—the interest in a general moral question, the approach through individual experience with the exploitation, slight in Petrarch's case, of personal traits, the philosophic valuation of that experience, and the employment of the loose epistolary style with its inducements to roving digression. But whether or not these affinities with the master of essay-writing are considered significant, the DE VITA SOLITARIA justifies study as a document in illustration of Petrarch's mind and of the spirit of the Renaissance—its humanism, its scepticism, its recognition of the life of the individual.

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FRANCIS PETRARCH

THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

FOREWORD

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FOREWORD

The Foreword of the illustrious Francis Petrarch, the Florentine, Poet Laureate, to his Work on the Life of Solitude, addressed to Philip, Bishop of Cavaillon.

FEW, my faithful friend, are the men whose respect and affection for my works is as great as yours, I will not say seems to be, but genuinely is. For I cannot harbor the suspicion that there is anything feigned or simulated in the clear and pure candor of your breast, nor do I think that if there were any simulation it could hold sway there for so long. For while truth is eternal, feigning and falsehood are of brief duration, and simulation is quickly exposed. Hair, though most carefully combed, is disordered by a faint breeze, and cosmetics, though painstakingly applied, are washed away by a light perspiration; so, even a clever lie must give way to truth and become transparent to one who examines it at close range. Every secret is in time disclosed; the shadows depart and the natural color remains. It is a great trouble to keep very long in concealment. No one lives long under water; he must come to the surface and expose the face which he had been hiding. These considerations, excellent father, induce me to believe what I earnestly wish—for we are easily inclined to believe whatever is agreeable—that my performances may give you pleasure, since I studiously aim that they should give pleasure only to the few. For, as you see, the matters that I treat are often novel and difficult, and the ideas severe, remote, and alien from the vulgar horde which regulates everything by its sensations. If I should fail to please the ignorant, I shall have no occasion for complaint; rather shall I enjoy good hopes of my talent according to my ambition. But if I should also miss the approval of the learned, I confess I shall be sorry, though not surprised. For who am I, or what is my claim, that amidst all the possible variety of judgments I should flatter myself and arrogantly look for

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what was not even the fortune of Marcus Tullius, for all his illustrious and divine eloquence? His book entitled *The Orator* (good God, what a work it is and how loftily inspired!) failed, as he himself somewhere remarks in his letters, to meet with the favor of Marcus Brutus at whose entreaty he had composed it and to whom he dedicated it; yet Brutus was a scholarly person and friendly to the writer. I pass over the more grievous annoyances which that great man suffered from distinguished orators who were yet far below himself, men like the two Asinii and Calvus, who with excessive presumption abused the prince of eloquence and censured what the rest of the world admired and worshipped. Who will protest against a judgment on his writing such as even Cicero was subjected to? With you, however, I have no such fear for myself.

To meet with favor and liking from you is not a token of my merit, but the result either of a certain sympathy in our dispositions or more probably of your extraordinary and wondrous love for me, which is no slight enemy to a fair judgment. Who that loves strongly can judge properly? If love were able to perceive and distinguish the truth, why should the ancients have imagined it as blind? However, though it is blind, it is not mute, and acts as the best of pleaders, pointing out to others what it does not see itself, and often what does not exist. A father's generous indulgence stops at nothing and overlooks the errors of his son even to the point of taking a certain satisfaction in them. If then you are mistaken in my merit, I am glad, and would like to have you remain ever in this error, since it is a source of pride to me and of satisfaction to you, and injures nobody. But if your good opinion is not mistaken, which I may be allowed to wish rather than to hope, shall I not congratulate myself the more, and on the strength of such a verdict become more precious and praiseworthy to myself?

Clearly, should I not have been a thoughtless steward of my time, if I did not have regard to one whom I consider the first admirer of my literary talent? The elder Cato is in this matter an important witness who, at the

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beginning of his book on *Origins*, says that men of great and unusual gifts must look with as careful an eye to their leisure as to their business.[1] This is a saying which many have approved, but our beloved Cicero embraced it with particular fondness, and in his speech defending Plancus declared that it had always struck him as high-minded and distinguished. If I also must take thought for it, either because of my moderate talent or my immoderate desire for fame, seeing that I have not yet tamed the latter with the curb of a rational mind, ought it not to be my first aim to have my leisure as remote from idleness as my life is from active affairs? And if I am to write anything which may have a chance of enduring, shall I not preferably inscribe it to those, by the reflection of whose glory I may be able to shine and resist the approach of the shadows with which the dark abyss of time and the forgetful ages, devourers of all illustrious names, threaten me? Whenever I revolve these things, your name occurs to my mind, so resplendent in itself and so linked with favors to me that, whether I look for glory or personal pleasure, I cannot pass it over without serious loss. Besides, being now, according to my old established custom, settled in your country, I feel that I owe you the tithe of my leisure and the first-fruits of my labor, as others owe you the first-fruits of their fields. And so it is my intention every year to pay something, whether it be more or less, in proportion to the fertility or sterility of my genius from one year to another, whereby, like one of your farmers, I may give evidence of my good faith, with such fruits at least as my little plot of ground produces.

If I may trust my judgment, there is nothing safer than silence for such as wish to escape the tongue of detraction. With this in mind, I confess that I often rein in my thoughts, often my pen; often I warn them in fear of all sorts of consequences; implore them not to betray me nor gratuitously to allege against me in evidence not only of my style but of my character, which is far more serious,

[1] Bk. i, 2.

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a piece of writing which may reach distant readers and future generations. For our life will be judged by our conversation; when the proof of our actions is gone, only the evidence of our speech will remain. But what profit is there in many words? I might perhaps have persuaded people to spare themselves and me and my good name, if it were not, as they say, that the mischief is already done and it is no longer possible for me to seek concealment in silence. I am already known and read and judged, already without hope of escaping the verdict of men and of hiding my talent. Whether I go out into the open or remain sitting at home, I must still be in the public gaze.

What now do you expect of me other than what I have always had in my mouth and in my heart, and what is preached by the very place I am now looking on—the celebration of a life of solitude and leisure such as once you made frequent trial of by yourself and recently tasted in my society for the brief space of two weeks? I say in my society, though it was I who was constantly seeking yours, and yet you declared, as much by your acts as by your speech, that you would not have come here except on my account nor have remained except for my sake. You proved, as is your wont with me, how great is the power of love in leveling inequalities. In view of this it should have been easy to persuade you of what, even if I maintained entire silence, you know from your own experience.

If, however, I proposed to commend this virtue to the crowd, I should be spending my efforts in vain. I speak not alone of the ignorant crowd but of many who think themselves educated and perhaps are not deceived in their opinion. But store of learning does not always dwell in a modest breast, and often there is considerable strife between the tongue and the mind, between teaching and the conduct of life. I speak of such as being oppressed and handicapped rather than improved by their education, have light-mindedly united a thing beautiful in itself, like knowledge, with disgraceful morals. It would have

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been much better if they had never seen the schools, since the only thing they learned there was with the overweening arrogance of their education to become vainer than all other men. They go about airing their Aristotle at street-crossings, while the common people crowd gaping about them. They scatter through the streets and arcades, counting the towers and horses and carriages. They measure the squares and walls of the city and gaze in stupid admiration at the dresses of the women, than which nothing is more transient and frivolous. They fix their eyes not only on living but on marble images, and when they come upon a statue they stop transfixed before it as though minded to address it. What gives the last touch to their madness is the pleasure they take in crowds and in noise. These are the men who carry their educated folly over the entire city like a vulgar and purchasable commodity. These are they who are averse to solitude and enemies of their own home; they leave it early in the morning and are with difficulty dragged back in the evening to their hated threshold. These are the men with whom it is proverbial to say that it is a splendid thing to visit other countries and to mix with people. Surely it is much better to visit stones and trees and to mix with tigers and bears. For man is not only a base and unclean animal, but furthermore—I say it unwillingly, and I wish that experience had not made it and steadily continued making it so generally familiar—he is pernicious, unstable, faithless, inconstant, fierce, and bloody, unless by the rare grace of God he puts off his bestiality and puts on humanity, unless, in short, he learns to make himself a man out of a common creature. If you ask those very persons why they are ever anxious to be in the company of others, they will answer, if they are in a mood to tell the truth, that it is only because they cannot endure being alone.

On this point I shall perhaps have more to say in the proper place; for the present I shall merely observe that it is not easy to remove with words errors that are deeply rooted, or to persuade persons of anything when they are

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naturally insusceptible of persuasion. Besides, people who are fond of silence are loth to waste their words. Let them therefore cease their clamor against the true idea, for I do not speak to such as they and do not greatly care if they read with a disdainful lift of their eyebrows matter that is not intended for them but for quite another type of mind. Let this suffice for them.

But you, beloved father, as I have already said, stand in need of no zealous pleader, since no one could persuade you of the contrary; and in your heart and brain, from which the errors have been long since uprooted, the true ideas are firmly lodged. Nevertheless, though I may not in speaking of a settled truth make the certainty greater, I may set it in a fairer light. Calling upon Christ our lover and asking, while I unfold these thoughts, for a truce of a few days from the greater and older tasks which beset me and keep incessantly ringing in my mind, I approach the execution of my design. Do you, father, I pray, likewise enter into a compact with your cares, withdraw yourself for a term from important affairs and accord your mind to me. It is not always the choicest things that give pleasure; as the rich sometimes find satisfaction in a change of food, so do wise men in a change of studies. Attend, therefore, and hear what ideas I am accustomed to entertain when I reflect on this whole subject of the solitary life. I shall set down but a few of the many thoughts that occur to me, but in these, as in a little mirror, you shall behold the entire disposition of my soul, the full countenance of a serene and tranquil mind.

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FRANCIS PETRARCH

THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

THE FIRST BOOK

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THE FIRST TRACTATE

Introductory, noting certain things which contribute to the understanding of what follows

Chapter 1. What is needful for them that desire to enjoy quiet

I BELIEVE that a noble spirit will never find repose save in God, in whom is our end, or in himself and his private thoughts, or in some intellect united by a close sympathy with his own. For though pleasure be covered with the most entangling lime and full of sweet and alluring baits, yet has it not the force to detain powerful wings very long upon the ground. But whether we are intent upon God, or upon ourselves and our serious studies, or whether we are seeking for a mind in harmony with our own, it behooves us to withdraw as far as may be from the haunts of men and crowded cities. That I speak truly, perhaps even they will hardly deny who find a charm in the stir and hum of many people, provided they are not so deeply whelmed and sunk in their false notions that they do not at times come to themselves, as it were, and return to the lofty path of truth, if only with a crawling motion. Would this were not the state of so many, and that men had at least as much concern for the cultivation of their minds as of their fields and many less important things; for the human mind teems with errors like a fat field overrun with brambles and if these are not diligently uprooted and with studious toil cleared away, the fruit in both cases will equally perish with the flower. But we sing to deaf ears. Yet, however lightly people in general may regard these matters, men of learning, I am sure, will second me in thought and word; and even if all should

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oppose me, you at least will not—indeed you would be the first to confute my opponents. You will recognize your own thoughts in my words, and I shall appear to have attained the ultimate goal of all eloquence—to have moved the mind of the listener according to my wish, and that with no trouble. It is a sore task for the pleader when he is bent on dragging over to his own view a mind that resists persuasion; but what trouble is there for an argument when it enters the ears of a person whose own thought chimes with what he hears and who, having the evidence of his own experience, in order to yield his assent requires neither concrete examples, nor weighty authority, nor pointed reasoning, but in silence says to himself, "It is true?"

Chapter 2. Of those who have written in praise of the life of solitude and whom the author in this work wished to imitate

I AM aware that certain saintly men have written much on this theme. In particular the renowned Basil has composed a little book in praise of the life of solitude—from which I have borrowed nothing but the title. As I have met with it in some very old manuscripts sometimes thrust in among the writings of Peter Damianus, I have been doubtful whether it was the work of Basil or of Peter.[1] But in this treatise I have in a large measure had my sole experience for guide, neither seeking any other leader nor disposed to accept one if he offered himself. For it is with a freer step, though perchance a less secure

[1]The work here referred to was printed by Jean Lambert in Paris, without a date, along with three other treatises on the solitary life, and entitled "*Libellus pulcherrimus sancti Basilii de laude Solitarie vite.*" The editor of the collection, while he assents in the traditional ascription to Basil, mentions also the claims of Gregory the Great and of Pietro Damiano and concludes that it may be safest to share the uncertainty of Petrarch concerning the authorship. The non-Basilian character of the treatise is amply established by its unqualified approval of the life of solitude and its style of unrestrained rhapsody. The most that Petrarch could have derived from it is a few illustrations.

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one, that I pursue my own route than I follow the traces of a stranger. You shall learn more from those who have had greater experience than I or who have searched further into the experience of others; from me you shall only hear whatever the moment may suggest. For I have not applied myself to this undertaking in a fastidious way, nor have I thought it necessary to do so, hardly fearing that matter would be wanting in so fertile a theme—at least in its superficial aspects—especially as I have often treated of it previously and the subject is variously and intimately wrought into my life. I have not composed my books with deliberation nor particularly polished my style, knowing that I am speaking to one who will like me even when I am tangled. Content with faithful and general observations and with a homely discourse, I have drawn forth what you here read partly from the present tenor of my life and partly from a past experience which is yet fresh in my memory. To you I appeal first as witness of these things, being frankly conscious that among the many causes which have won to you my all unforced affection, not the least has been that you were led by a love of solitude and the desire for freedom which accompanies it to flee what is called the Roman Court, now so near—almost adjacent—to you, where you might have attained no mean elevation if that Tartarean din and confusion had offered you as much pleasure as you always derive from blessed solitude.

Chapter 3. Of the manner of treating the substance of this work, and the differences between a life of solitude and a life spent in crowds

IT SEEMS to me that I can demonstrate the blessedness of solitude by exhibiting the troubles and afflictions of a populous environment, reviewing the actions of men whom one kind of life preserves in peace and tranquillity and the other kind keeps agitated and careworn

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and breathless. For there is a single idea underlying all these observations, that one kind of life is attended with happy leisure and the other with grievous worry. But if at any time some marvelous instance or some extraordinary concurrence of nature and chance, properly to be reckoned among miracles, should befall to change my opinion, I shall change it without shame and shall not be afraid to prefer the pleasant and reposeful assemblages of people to a pining and anxious seclusion. For it is not the mere name of solitude but the good things which are proper to it that I praise. And it is not so much the solitary recesses and the silence that delight me as the leisure and freedom that dwell within them. Nor am I so inhuman as to hate men, whom I am instructed by divine commandment to love as I love myself, but I hate the sins of men, especially my own, and the troubles and sad afflictions that reside among crowds. These things, unless I err, can be treated more suggestively not by discoursing separately what can be said on one side and on the other, but by mingling both, touching now this aspect and now the other, as the mind is by turns directed toward either, and, with alternate shift of the eye, as it were, from right to left, easily judges the difference between the very diverse objects which lie side by side. It is with intent that I have placed the bitter first, that I might follow it up with the sweet, and that the pleasanter taste, being felt the last wherever there was a division, should thereby prevail upon the mind.

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THE SECOND TRACTATE

Of the misery of the busy man and the unhappy dweller in cities and the happiness of the retired man, inferred from the actions of each

Chapter I. Of the wretchedness of the busy man and the happiness of the retired man in their hours of sleep and on awaking

BUT what need of many circumstances? Let us get to the point and discharge our promise. Place now before your mind's eye two persons of contrary habits whom I shall describe to you, and what you observe in them you may apply in general.

The busy man, a hapless dweller of the city, awakes in the middle of the night, his sleep interrupted by his cares or the cries of his clients, often even by fear of the light and by terror of nightly visions. No sooner is he up than he settles his body to the miserable bench and applies his mind to falsehood. On treachery his heart is wholly fixed—whether he meditates driving a corrupt bargain, betraying his friend or his ward, assailing with his seductions his neighbor's wife whose only refuge is her chastity, spreading the veil of justice over a litigious quarrel, or whatever other mischief of a public or private character he intends. Now eager with passion and aflame with desire, and now frozen with desperation, like a very bad workman, he begins before dawn the web of the daily toil in which he shall involve others with himself.

The retired man—a man of leisure—awakes in happy mood, refreshed by moderate rest and a short sleep, un-

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broken, unless when he is aroused at intervals by the songs of night-haunting Philomel. When he has shaken himself lightly from his couch and, banishing thoughts of his body, begun to intone in the calm hours, he devoutly implores the guardian of his lips to make a passage for the matin praises which should issue from them, and he summons the Lord to strengthen his heart, and implores him to make haste, trusting not at all to his own forces and tremblingly aware of imminent peril. His mind is set not upon weaving deceptions but on reciting with unwearied service of the tongue and pious humility of spirit the glory of God and the praise of his saints, not only day by day, but hour by hour, lest the memory of the divine gifts should by chance fade from his grateful heart. Yet often, wondrous to say, filled with unanxious fear and tremulous hope, mindful of the past and thoughtful of what is to come, he overflows with joyful sorrow and with happy tears. No pleasures of the busy man, no luxury of city life, no pomp of kingdoms can match his state. Looking up from his place to the starry heaven and sighing with all his heart for the Lord his God who has his dwelling there, with thoughts of his country from the place of his exile, he turns immediately to the study of some honest and agreeable lesson, and so nourished with the most delightful food, he awaits the coming of light with great composure of mind.

Chapter 2. Of the wretched busy man and the happy solitary when the light of day has come

THE longed-for light has now arrived to their differing prayers, and the busy man's doorway is beset by enemies and friends. He is greeted, solicited, pulled in one direction, jostled in another, assailed with arguments, and rent asunder. The retired man finds

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a free doorway, and he has the choice of remaining where he is or going whithersoever his mind disposes him.

The busy man, loaded with complaints and affairs, goes in troubled spirits to the courts, and the beginning of his cruel day is marked by lawsuits. The retired man, with store of leisure and of calm, goes blithely into a near-by woods and enters joyfully upon the propitious threshold of a serene day.

The busy man, when he has appeared in the proud mansions of the powerful or before the dreaded bar of the magistrates, by mixing falsehood with truth, either injures the just cause of the innocent or fosters the insolence of the culprit. Or he directly plots something to his own dishonor and another's ruin, his conscience all the while tormenting him and fear frequently disturbing his speech as he intrudes one word in place of another, the truth instead of a lie, suffering sudden changes of color and chiding himself that he did not choose starvation in a desert before the reputation of eloquence[1] and that he did not prefer the life of a plowman before that of an orator.[2] Suddenly, with his business still unfinished, he returns home and with base concealments steals away from the view of his own followers as well as of his enemies.

The retired man, as soon as he has gained a flowery spot on some salubrious hill, the sun being now risen in his splendor, breaks joyously with pious lips into the daily praises of the Lord, the more delightedly if with his devout breath are harmonized the gentle murmur of the down-rushing stream and the sweet plainings of the birds. He prays first for innocence, a bridle for his tongue to make it ignorant of contention, a shield for his eyes to protect them from vain shows, purity of heart, freedom from delusion, and continence which tames the flesh. Soon after, during the third lauds, he worships the third person in the trinity and prays for the visitation of the holy ghost, for a tongue and a mind that utter themselves

[1] *quoad non potius deserti famem quam diserti famam concupierit.*
[2] *et arator quam orator esse maluerit.*

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in healing confession, and for charity burning with a heavenly flame and of power to enkindle one's neighbors. If he devoutly prays for these things he already hath much, being happier in this rapture of mind than in any splendor of gold or jewels. But now slowly retracing his steps, as the sun which in the morning had shed a fresh light on all objects climbs in its course and blazes in the meridian, he desires nothing more earnestly than the extinction of those contentious flames which the other seeks to feed and to fan with his breath, and while the latter is consumed with his passions, he entreats that all the noxious heats of evil desires be dispelled. Finally he prays for that which the satiric poet teaches us is the one thing which may without peril be prayed for, the possession of a sound mind in a sound body.[3] Which of these two, I pray you, so far has spent his hours more honestly?

Chapter 3. Of the wretchedness of the busy man and the happiness of the retired man when the hour of dinner arrives

WHEN the hour of dinner is at hand the busy man composes himself amidst his piles of cushions in a huge hall over which ruin impends. The roof resounds with a variety of noises while all about stand the dogs of the hall and the household mice. A crowded array of flatterers vie with one another in obsequiousness, and a troop of greedy menials sets the tables with bustling confusion. As the floor is swept of its dirt everything is filled with vile dust. Silver vessels wrought with gold flash through the room and goblets hollowed out of precious stones. The benches are covered with silk and the walls with purple, and carpets are spread over

[3] Juvenal, *Satires*, x, 356.

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the floor, but the servants shiver in their nakedness. Once the line of battle is drawn up, the signal of the onset is delivered by a trumpet. The captains of the kitchen rush against the captains of the hall. A great clatter is set up; dishes conquered by land and sea are dragged in, and wine trodden in ancient Cos. The vintages of Italy and Greece glitter in the ruddy gold; in a single cup are blended Gnosos and Meroe, Venusius and Falernus, the hills of Sorrento and Calabria. And they are not content till the Ausonian Bacchus, seasoned with the honey of Hybla or the juice of the oriental cane and perfumed with blackberries, artfully changes his natural flavor. In another place may be seen an equal display of a different sort—horrible beasts, unknown fishes, unheard-of birds, saturated in costly spices. Some of these, forgetful of their ancient home, show their origin only in their designation and preserve nothing but the name of the Phasian bird. There are smoking dishes which are a cause of amazement to the very banqueters, having been subjected to every wanton trick of the cooks. If a hungry man were to see in what a filthy and disgusting manner they were concocted, he would be sated with the view alone and go his way. In that place may be seen a mixed and mutual strife of the native with the foreign, creatures of the sea with those of the land, white with black, sour with sweet, the hairy with the feathered, the tame with the savage,—the old Ovidian chaos renewed, as it were, and compressed into a narrow space, not in a single body but in one small dish:

> For hot and cold were in one body fixt;
> And soft with hard, and light with heavy mixt.[4]

Amidst such an impure mixture of divers and mutually hostile ingredients, amidst all these yellow and black and blue condiments, the busy taster not without reason looks for the suspected poison, though against hidden

[4] Ovid, *Metam.* i, 19-20. (Dryden's translation).

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treachery another kind of remedy has been found. Between the wine and the food there shoot forth the livid crests of serpents cunningly twisted among golden branches, and as though by a voluptuary device Death itself wonderfully stands on guard against the death of miserable man. But the feaster sits with countenance overcast, eyes dull, forehead clouded, nose wrinkled, and cheeks pale, parting his sticky lips with difficulty, scarce lifting his head. Fairly overpowered by all the glitter and odors, he knows not where he is, being still swollen with the excesses of the previous night, dazed with the outcome of the morning's business, and already cunningly plotting where to turn next and what mischief to perform. He perspires, he sniffs, he belches, he gapes, nibbling at everything and nauseated by all.

But the retired man, content with few attendants or a single one, or even without any, quick-witted and alert because of the previous day's fast, adorns the neat board before his modest hearth with nothing better than his own presence. In place of tumult he has peace, silence instead of clamor, himself alone instead of a crowd. He is his own companion, his own story-teller, his own table-guest. Nor is he afraid to be alone, seeing that in place of a mansion he has bare walls of rude stone, and instead of an ivory chair, a bench of oak or plain beechwood or fir. He loves to look not on gold but at the sky, and to tread on earth better than on purple. He is a pleasant musician, and as he sits down and rises up, his sweetest song is the benediction and the grace. His steward, if need be, is also his butler, cook, and domestic. Whatever is placed before him he renders precious by his good humor and refinement. One would imagine that his food was all conveyed from distant shores and forests and his drink pressed among the Ligurian and Picentian hills. Such is the countenance and such the mind of him who joys in this existence, so grateful is he toward God and man, so happy in the common, unpurchased fare, that not only,

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like the old man in Virgil,[5] does he liken his mind to the wealth of kings, but puts a far higher value on it. He envies no one, he hates no one. Content with his own lot and inaccessible to the injuries of Fortune, he feels himself above all fears and all desires. He knows that no poison is poured into his vessels. He understands that a few things suffice for the life of man, that the greatest and truest wealth is to have no wishes, the greatest power to have no fears. He passes his life happily and tranquilly, with peaceful nights, serene days, and undisturbed recreation. He goes about freely and sits down without trembling. He neither contrives snares nor is on guard against them. He knows that he is loved for himself and not for his possessions, that his death will be of benefit to no one and that his life is harmful to no one. He thinks that it does not greatly matter how long he lives but how well, nor does he regard the time and place of his death of so much importance as its manner. On one thing only is his heart strongly fixed, that he shall round out with a beautiful close the story of a well spent life.

Chapter 4. Of the wretchedness of the busy man and the happiness of the retired man when dinner is past

GRADUALLY the hours fly and the day slips past, and now dinner is over. The busy man is distraught by the army of his hangers-on, the disorder of the tables, and the clatter of men and dishes. The roof groans with drunken jests and the hundred complaints of hunger. For it is not the least evil of the rich man's table that it is incapable of justice, and so there is hunger there and repletion, but moderation never. There is an unpleasant odor in the court and a disagree-

[5] *Georgics*, iv, 132.

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able color, and the footing is uncertain. The whole floor of the kitchen is stained and reeking with the scattered refuse, and the place is slippery with wine and clouded with smoke, filled with nasty scum and tepid washings and decomposing fat, whitened with bones and red with blood. In short, to use the expression of Ambrose, one might call it a slaughter-house rather than a kitchen. It may be, as the ancients say, that this early meal got its name because it was eaten by the warriors in preparation for battle;[6] in this case, however, it was not a preparation but a complete action. Indeed one might imagine a genuine battle there instead of a meal. The chieftain is wounded and tottering, and the whole army, overcome with drink, goes staggering away. The table is the line of battle, pleasure is the smooth and treacherous enemy, the couches are the tombs, and conscience takes the place of hell.

But with the retired man everything is different. His house is better suited for the feasts of angels than of men. Its sweet odor and color are the best index of his manners and witness of his refinement. His table is peaceful, innocent of luxury and disorder, an enemy to gluttony, and free from all uncleanliness, a place where pure joys dwell and whence foul pleasures are exiled, where temperance rules as queen, where the couch is chaste and untroubled, and conscience is a paradise.

The former gets up drunk or in ill humor, the latter serene and sober. The one is in dread of disease; the other, conscious of his abstemiousness, feels safe from all the ills to which the human frame is subject. The one is either surly or boisterous, the other refrains from both extremes and gives thanks to God. All the rest of the day is spent by one in licentious indulgence, in sleep, in anxious cares, and toilsome business, by the other in the worship of God and in noble studies, in learning new things and remembering old, while only a moderate part of the day goes for needful repose and innocent recreation.

[6] *Prandium, quasi parandium.*

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Chapter 5. The employments of the unhappy man of action and the happy man of leisure at midday

THE sun now stands in the middle of the heavens, and the man of action is agitated, fretful, excited, redoubling all his tricky contrivances lest he should miss something on that particular day through lack of energy, or lest any sluggishness in his evil deliberations deprive his fertile wit of the hoped-for outcome, anxious that his hidden snares should take effect before nightfall. For it is a characteristic of practically all evil designs that they brook no postponement. The wicked mind is impatient of delay; it cannot bear to put off for a single moment the object of its craving. The observation of the satirist, that whoever wants to become rich wants to do so suddenly,[7] does not apply to avarice alone. This is a trait which Cupidity shares equally with her sisters, Wrath and Licentiousness, who being begot in hell of an infernal father have not unlearned the confusion and rashness and horror which were the nature of their own origin. For these are the Furies whom the poets properly have declared to be the daughters of Acheron and Night because they bear with them the gloom of ignorance and the stuff of repentance. And these very creatures of hell, from which men say they have their origin, are also dwellers in cities and attendants upon the busy man, and they are constantly inciting the blind and perverse passions with their burning goads immediately to execute their worst intentions lest, if there should be any delay, a reformation and healthy state of mind should steal upon them. For vice dislikes all restraints, and just as earnestness and deliberation are becoming in honorable affairs, so unadvised haste is always the friend of evil designs.

The retired man, on the other hand, does nothing hurriedly, but noting the passage of time in its flight

[7]Juvenal, *Satires*, xiv, 176.

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and longing to be where there is life without flow of time or fear of death, he turns once more to his devotions, praying not only for the light of a single day but for the clear evening of his whole existence and the glory of a never setting life, and this he implores not as his right but as a reward for the sacred death of Christ, knowing that it were more than man deserved if the earthly death of one who had no sin had not been of such great efficacy that it could procure immortal life for those who were by nature mortal and had perished through their sinfulness. And so, soon after, as he contemplates the sinking of the sun and imagines himself also declining towards the ground, anticipating the descent of black darkness upon the earth, he supplicates the aid of the supernal light. And whether he begs with tears that his spirit may not be exiled from heaven for the weight of its offences or that he may be granted the pure light of faith, that his burning passions may be cooled, his vile thoughts cleansed, his wavering mind supported and its contentions pacified, he still prolongs his morning chants with evening praises from the inexhaustible fountain of his piety.

Chapter 6. Of the wretchedness of the busy man and the happiness of the retired man when evening falls

WHEN the sun has set, the busy man is again compelled to issue from his house and to rove through the city, treading its dirty streets and colliding with people in his way, sweating, toiling, panting, burning; and after he has applied himself to every kind of fraud and cleverly untangled all his intricate snares, he returns at last, late and exhausted, and grumbling sorely about his practice, bringing home neither a name of good report nor a clear conscience, but perhaps a little gold and unquestionably a great deal of crime and hatred.

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But the retired man, rejoicing that the day has passed without a blemish, seeks out a clear spring or grassy bank by the sea-shore, and before the light has faded he implores the unfailing mercy of his creator to arm him with watchful sobriety, with the shield of prayer and faith against the dangers of the night to come, against the temptations and treachery and fury of the enemy who rages like a lion, and to guard him against dreams and pollution and the apparitions of night. And so, entrusting his spirit to the hands of the Lord and calling upon the angels to stand guard over his habitation, he betakes himself home, having no wrong to complain of nor any evil wish, but bringing with him the praise and satisfaction of a soul daily advancing in goodness.

In short, one man spends all his days in despoiling the living, the other in interceding for the dead; one in assailing the chasitity of matrons and virgins, the other in reverent worship of the Virgin Matron. One makes martyrs, the other glorifies them; one persecutes saints, the other offers them homage.

Chapter 7. Of the wretchedness of the man of action and the happiness of the man of leisure when night returns and it is time for supper

WITH the return of night the busy man returns to his potations. There is great pomp and a long array of attendants before and behind. One could imagine it to be the funeral of a living man. Lest the obsequies be lacking in any circumstance, the hired mourners and the pipes precede, then comes the corpse, still warm and still breathing, in sumptuous raiment and perfumed with rich odors, and is once more buried among cushions. He heaps a heavy supper upon

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his still undigested dinner and, obstructing the way for another meal, prepares disgust for the following day. The retired man, however, either persuades himself that he has already supped or sups in such a way as to give point to Plato's saying, that he disliked to fill up twice a day.

Chapter 8. Of the wretchedness of the man of action and the happiness of the man of leisure when it is time for sleep

AFTER this they both seek their beds in very different states of body and mind. One is full of troubles, replete with dining and wining, gripped by fear and envy, dispirited by the checks he has encountered or vainly elated by his successes, afflicted with melancholy, bursting with wrath, at war with himself, not master of his own mind. He is besieged by parasites, spied upon by rivals, deafened with outcries, importuned by letters and besieged by messages, held in suspense by a report and terrified by a rumor, stunned by omens and deluded by falsehoods, wearied out with complaints and harassed by contentions even at night. His life is like that of the fiends; he is hateful to his neighbors, oppressive to his fellow-citizens, an object of terror or derision to his own people. He is suspected by all and trusted by none. For a long time he tosses about on his purple-covered couch, sleepless and making trial of all sorts of wanton pleasures. And after his miserable body has been spurred to the enjoyment of immediate sensations and his imagination has wandered with a vague longing toward remote delights, he is finally overcome with weariness and his eyes are closed in sleep. But his troubles are still awake and his distracted soul is on fire and gnawed by the worm of an undying conscience. Then he beholds his day's actions—the clients betrayed, the poor oppressed, the farmers evicted from their land, the virgins violated,

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the wards defrauded, the widows robbed, the innocent tortured and slain, and along with all these the Furies wreaking vengeance on his crimes. Often he cries out in his sleep or makes querulous moans, and often his sleep is broken by some sudden terror.

But the other is full of pure joy and sacred hope and inspired with a pious love, not frantic like that of Nisus but like the love of Peter for Christ. He is happy in the sense of a sound conscience, his trust in men, and fear of God. He is free from noxious food and superfluous cares, solitary, silent, serene, almost like one of the angels. He is dear to God, an object of fear to none, of love to all. Entering his chamber, which is contrived for sleep and not for unchaste pleasures, he enjoys sweet and undisturbed repose. His dreams, if he has any, mostly resemble the actions of his waking hours; or he beholds still fairer visions, being more blessed than the other even in this portion of his life. And his advantage is not only in greater happiness of mind but in greater health of body and in an easier command over the movements of his limbs. For the virtues of the mind, and moderation in particular, are of great benefit to health of body, and generally those who do most service to the body do it most mischief.

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THE THIRD TRACTATE

Of the difference in the lot of the busy man and the solitary man

Chapter 1. Summary of the discussion and transition to the unhappiness of those who are engaged in other people's affairs

BEHOLD, father, I have placed before your view a single day of an individual man of action and an individual man of leisure. It is the same with all individuals of the kind and all days, except that the trouble of one class grows more bitter, the peace of the other more delightful in proportion as their habit of mind becomes confirmed by the passage of time and earthly motions bear them on toward the state of eternity which comes ever nearer in life's steady course. For one class there is labor without end, for the other ease.

Perhaps you will think the condition of those persons happier who are taken up with other people's business. They, however, are ruled by the power of another man's nod and learn what they must do from another man's look. They can claim nothing as their own. Their house, their sleep, their food, is not their own, and, what is even more serious, their mind is not their own, their countenance is not their own. They do not weep and laugh at the promptings of their own nature but discard their own emotions to put on those of another. In sum, they transact another man's business, think another man's thoughts, live by another man's grace. It is of these men the noble poet is speaking when he says:

And some with impudence invade the court.[1]

[1]Virgil, *Georgics*, ii, 504 (Dryden's translation).

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It is these men whom another poet rebukes more boldly and stingingly, in that satire in which he treats of life at court, when he says reproachfully to his friend,

> If,—by reiterated scorn made bold,
> Your mind can still its shameless tenor hold,
> Still think the greatest blessing earth can give,
> Is solely at another's cost to live—[2]

Between these men and such as are condemned to pass their lives in the dungeons of rulers and kings I know not what difference there is except that the former are bound with chains of gold, the latter with iron. The chain is fairer, the servitude equal, the blame greater, because they do of their own accord what the others are compelled to by force. To express my opinion of these men in a few words, I call them the most profoundly unhappy of all unhappy men of the world, because they are not even permitted to enjoy the brief reward of their evil practices. They have lived at the behest of another but are doomed to die at their own peril; they have toiled for the benefit of others but have incurred the sin for themselves. Happy would they have been if they had labored without sin and without thought of advantage, but now, while the offence is their own, the pleasant fruits, deceitful and fleeting though they be, serve for another's delectation. We say that the husbandman's lot is hard if he plants a tree whose fruit he is not destined to look upon. For who, the Apostle asks, "planteth a vineyard and eateth not of its fruit?"[3] But he at least may find comfort in the thought that another generation will enjoy it, and though he knows to a certainty that what he makes will not belong to him, he does not on that account refrain from his work. When he is asked for whom he sows the seed, he answers in Cicero's words, "For the immortal gods;"[4] it would be still better if he said, "For the one immortal God." How much more unfortunate are those who sow that from which they

[2] Juvenal, *Satires*, v, 1-2 (Gifford's translation).
[3] *I Cor.* ix, 7.
[4] *De Senectute*, Ch. 7.

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reap only punishment while others gather pleasures that are deserving of punishment. They cannot blame anyone but themselves for the mischief they do. They cannot blame their own generation which with all their bustling activity they often deprive of the freedom of action it had formerly attained,[5] nor posterity, for which they prepare slavery, nor God whom they offend in order to be pleasing to men. They cannot even charge their fault against the very persons whom they injure in pandering to them, for whom at the cost of their own eternal life they prepare a brief interval of sinfulness, which means the privilege, for these too, of eternal damnation. Stark blind they are and utterly mad, plunged into the world's light—it would be better to say its darkness—under hostile stars, since while they raise others aloft, themselves lie prostrate, crushed it may be by the very persons to whom they have devoted their service. In the meantime, having procured many conveniences for their patrons and contributed much toward the indulgence of their desires, they have themselves had no advantage from their actions, and the only glory which they have reaped from their base zeal is to have fed the greed of princes and the lust of lords with their acceptable counsels.

What more shall I say? There is an imprecation current among our people which seems to me no less biting than one which is habitual with the Cretans; though neither is at all horrible in sound, there is a certain destructive venom wrapped up in both. The anathema of the Cretans is that their enemies may find delight in evil companionship while with us the curse is that they may never cease from employment and care. If one considers somewhat deeply—not the words themselves but the thought implied in them—one can scarcely find a sadder thing to say. I speak of those busy men whom we constantly see and of whom common life is full; a different species of this class does not exist, or it is so rare as practically never to be seen. Where the truth is sought, I am loth to spend my time on fictitious shadows.

[5]The meaning of the clause here rendered is obscure to the translator: *cui sæpenumero laborando præceptam sibi libertatem eripiunt.*

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Chapter 2. Almost every busy man is unhappy, though there are some few who are worthily employed

AND SO, to dismiss the matter once for all, in my opinion practically every busy man is unhappy, and the man who is employed in the service of another is doubly unhappy because he has only his pains for his reward. Now I am not unaware that there have been, and perchance still are, very active men of a saintly nature who themselves go the way of Christ and lead straying souls along the same path. When this happens I acknowledge that it is a great and immeasurable good, a double blessing to be contrasted with the twofold misery of which I have said so much. For what is there more blessed, more worthy of a man, and more like divine goodness than to serve and assist as many as require help? Whoever is able to do so and does not, has repudiated, I think, the glorious duty of humanity and proved false to the name as well as the nature of man. If it should be proved that this is possible, I shall freely subordinate my private inclination to the public welfare and, abandoning the place of retirement in which I consulted only my own humor, I shall venture forth where I can be of use to the world, following the advice given by our Cicero. "It is more in accord with nature," he says, "to emulate the great Hercules and undergo the greatest toil and trouble for the sake of aiding or saving the world, if possible, than to live in seclusion, not only free from all care, but revelling in pleasures and abounding in wealth, while excelling others also in beauty and strength. Thus Hercules denied himself and underwent toil and tribulation for the world, and, out of gratitude for his services, popular belief has given him a place in the council of the gods. The better and more noble, therefore, the character with which a man is endowed, the more does he prefer the life of service to the life of pleasure."[6] So says Cicero, and I yield an unconstrained assent, if things are as he says.

[6] *De Officiis*, Bk. iii, Ch. 5 (Walter Miller's translation).

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But it is my view of the matter that the force of a general truth is not destroyed by a very few exceptional instances. There are many who profess to believe that employment is of general advantage and holier than any kind of retirement. I know. But how many, I ask you, do we see who carry out what they profess? There may be a few or there may be a great many; show me one and I shall hold my peace. I do not deny that there are learned and eloquent men who maintain the opposite view with great subtlety. But it is not so much a question of cleverness in arguing as of conduct. They go about the cities and deliver long harangues in public about vices and virtues. I could barely refrain from inserting here the satirist's biting tooth in a way which would be decidedly to the point, but I recalled to whom I was addressing myself and decided to sacrifice a vanity of style rather than be wanting in true respect. Yet these earnest persons, you observe, say many useful things which often are of advantage to their hearers. I grant it, but the physician is not necessarily in good health when he helps the patient with his advice; in fact, he often dies of the very ailment which he has cured in others. I do not disdain the careful choice and artful composition of words contrived for the salvation of men, and I honor the useful work regardless of the character of the workman, but this is a school of life and not of rhetoric, and our thoughts are now fixed not on the vain-glory of eloquence but on the secure repose of the soul.

I am not unmindful of the sentence of Seneca: "Throw aside all hindrances and give up your time to attaining a sound mind," to which he promptly adds, "No man can attain it who is engrossed in other matters."[7] Now what I maintain is not that solitude develops such a mind but that it is conducive to preserving and strengthening it, for I have not forgotten another observation of the same writer to the effect that the place in which one lives does not greatly contribute to one's tranquillity.[8] Be it so,

[7] *Epistles* 53 (Gummere's translation).
[8] *Ibid.*, 55.

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yet doubtless it contributes something. Otherwise why does he say elsewhere that "we ought to select abodes which are wholesome not only for the body but also for the character?"[9] And in still another place he exclaims, "I shall flee far from the very sight and neighborhood of the Forum."[10] For as a severe climate puts to the test even the sturdiest constitution, so there are some situations which are very unwholesome for a well-disposed mind before it has come to full maturity. Whence, pray, is the difference in the soundness of minds and habits of conduct if there is nothing in places? There is something in places, with Seneca's leave I would say a great deal, though not everything. I quite agree with his view that "it is the mind which must make everything agreeable to itself."[11] That is well said, after his fashion. But whence comes the light of truth and right reason? Doubtless from a source without.

Chapter 3. In praise of the serenity of mind which is granted to those who are confirmed in solitude, and that the mind cannot apply itself to a diversity of interests

WHAT I have said about environment I shall affirm about the mind itself, that it is something, nay, a great deal, but by no means everything, and only that mind is truly reasonable which makes proper allowance for the influence of its environment. There is something great and veritably divine in a serene composure of mind which makes it an attribute of God alone, but it is a gift which he most frequently likes to be-

[9] *Ibid.*, 51.
[10] *Ibid.*, 28.
[11] *Ibid.*, 55.

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stow upon those who have fixed their dwelling in seclusion. Both these points I have for brevity's sake proved by general arguments and by a juxtaposed series of contrasts, and shall before long confirm with examples from illustrious lives. If perchance a man capable of heeding truth should closely apply his inmost ear not to the tongue but to the heart of one of those preachers at whom the credulous throng gapes in amazement, I believe that he would admit without cavil that he had heard his naked conscience honestly confessing that happiness consisted not in sounding words, but quiet deeds, and in the inward possession of truth rather than in the applause of strangers or in fragile reputation. And then he will hear many things quite at variance with the words which, along with the rest of the crowd, he admired in the pulpit, and he will understand that there is a difference between the external surface and the heart of things.

It is without question the nature of the mind that when it is earnestly applied to one interest it must neglect many others. Hence it is that those who cultivate eloquence are often so inept for action and that men engaged in important affairs are less accomplished in expression. In the same way those who aim at an ideal of sobriety avoid vulgar pleasures, while those who place a value on pleasurable indulgence scorn the notion of sobriety. Men who are possessed with a desire for augmenting their private wealth often make small account of their friends and the state and lead an ignoble kind of life, while those who are magnanimously devoted to the public interest are frequently seen to be neglectful of their domestic concerns. The same wind cannot be equally favorable to mariners whose courses lie in opposite directions. This I say that you may not be surprised at finding the same truth applied to the matter under discussion. The busy life is fond of noise and finds pleasure in talkativeness, while contemplation is the friend of silence and retirement; and by the same token, the former hates silence, the latter hates disturbance.

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Chapter 4. How from the dangers of the shepherd's life it may be inferred that the busy life is less safe, and for that reason the author himself has chosen the retired life

WHICH mode of life is safer—this, my father, is what I shall examine in my discourse today. Tell me, therefore, if I may take my example from the occupation which I have had occasion to mention, how often does the shepherd lose his life in the course of his duties? How often does he fall into a trap while trying to find a sheep that has strayed, or tumble over a precipice while pursuing one that is running away? How often, do you think, does the healthy physician contract a mortal disease while he is making the round of his patients, or the gravedigger while he is burying the dead encounter the contagion which results in his own death? Let no one deceive himself that the contagions to which the mind is subject are less serious than those of the body; they are in fact more so, they afflict more heavily, they penetrate more deeply, they diffuse themselves more stealthily. But it is creditable, people say, to be helpful to great numbers, it is praiseworthy to be of service to as many as we can. Who denies it? Yet we know where a well-ordered charity begins. Take my word for it, it is a matter of no small assurance to promise aid to the struggling, counsel to the perplexed, light to the blind, joy to the grieving, safety to the terrified, hope to the depressed, health to the sick, rest to the weary, comfort to the afflicted; to show the path to the straying, to place your shoulders beneath the falling and to extend the hand to those that lie prostrate. These are great things if they are performed, trifling if only promised; for a large promise is of no more consequence than a small one, it is only the fulfilment that is more impressive.

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But I am not so much proposing a rule for others as exposing the principles of my own mind. If it commends itself to anyone, let him follow its suggestion. Whoever does not like it is free to reject it and, leaving us to our solitude, to embrace his own anxious cares and live to his own satisfaction in scorn of our rural retreat. I should not mind, I confess, to be of service to as many as possible or even, in Ovid's words, to be a bearer of health to the entire world;[12] but the first is in the power of only a few, the last of Christ alone. I would yield so far to persons of a contrary opinion as to admit that whoever is in a place of safety sins against the law of nature if he does not offer what aid he can to the struggling. But for me, who have myself been hitherto struggling as in a great shipwreck, it is enough to pray for the aid of him who is alone able to provide aid in our need. My prayers are far-reaching, but I shall be content if they are fulfilled to a moderate degree. I could wish to have everybody, or at least as many as possible, gain salvation with me. But in the end what do you expect me to say? It is enough for me, yea, a cause of great happiness, if I do not perish myself. But for those who profess themselves guardians of the helpless sheep, alas, how much I fear that they are wolves eager to rend them alive.

[12] *Metam.* ii, 642.

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THE FOURTH TRACTATE

What is proper for those who have decided to embark on the life of solitude

Chapter 1. The retired life, especially to men unversed in literature, is heavier than death and seems calculated to bring on death

LET me not involve myself too long in reflections not pertinent to my argument, but let each man decide according to his own preference, for it is impossible that it should suit all men to follow a single road in life, even if they were all bound for the same ultimate destination. In this connection each man must seriously take into account the disposition with which nature has endowed him and the bent which by habit or training he has developed. For there are some for whom the life of solitude is more grievous than death and seems calculated to result in death, and this will happen particularly with persons who have no acquaintance with literature. Such men, if they have no one to talk to, are destitute of any resource for communion with themselves or with books, and necessarily remain dumb. And indeed isolation without literature is exile, prison, and torture; supply literature, and it becomes your country, freedom, and delight. "What is sweeter than lettered ease?"[1] is a well known saying of Cicero. Not less familiar is Seneca's sentence, "Leisure without study is death; it is a tomb for the living man."[2] Although I know full well that those two sweet solaces of philosophers, solitude and

[1] *Tusculans*, Bk. v, Ch. 36.
[2] *Epistles*, 82.

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leisure, as I said at the outset, are at times annoying even to such as have an acquaintance with literature, the reason for it is evident. For with men of this class it sometimes happens that they are fettered by pleasure and in love with their prison, or seek to make their living in traffic with the multitude and in sordid business, or aspire to climb up the slippery steps of honors through the windy suffrages of the populace. For these—and their number in our times is great—literature is not a means of giving cultivation to the mind and refinement to life, but an instrument for procuring wealth. Children are sent by their parents to study literature not as to an academy but as to a market-place, at great expense to the family but with the hope of a much greater financial return, so that it need be no occasion for surprise if they make a venal and avaricious use of an education which they have pursued for purposes of sale and on which they have based the sinful expectation of a usury not of a hundred per cent but a thousand. All these things have to be carefully considered in selecting a mode of life, and so I would not invite to the life of solitude such men as I am describing nor willingly admit them if they came of their own accord. You may infer from this how numerous a lot I should exclude. For what shall a fish do out of water or these fellows at a distance from cities? That is what I formerly said to a certain enervated and effeminate lawyer who had begun to frequent this locality, not from any love of quiet, of which he had not the least notion, nor from any yearning after leisure, which he hated, but only from some itch of imitation. It is a question whether he was a greater nuisance to himself or to me, but he left suddenly, being overcome with the tedium of the place and the craving for the pleasures of the city. If I had not foreseen this outcome I should have withdrawn on my own part, so utterly destitute of conformity were our conditions and our ways of regarding things. It is true that he called himself my friend and that we had engaged since boyhood in the same studies, but our aims were far apart, as the event proved. I return, however, to my purpose.

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Chapter 2. Although it were best that every man should recognize in his youth what is the proper kind of life for him, nevertheless if one fails to do it in youth, it is wise that he should at least do it in old age

IT were an excellent thing, if want of counsel, the unavoidable concomitant of youth, did not stand in the way, that each one of us at the very beginning of his maturity should give careful and earnest thought to the selection of some particular kind of life, nor ever turn aside from the path he had once chosen, except for important reasons or for some grave necessity. Hercules did so on entering manhood, as is testified by Xenophon, the pupil of Socrates, and by Cicero. But because we fail to do it and live in most cases not by our own judgment but by that of the crowd, and are rushed along over tortuous paths, following the footsteps of others in the dark, we often emerge upon perilous and impassable roads and are carried so far that we have become something or other before we have had a chance to look about and consider what we wanted to be. And if one has not been able in youth to reflect on the role which nature or accident or some mistake has thrust upon him, let him ponder it in his old age, and like a wayfarer who has gone astray let him as far as he may look to his safety before nightfall, being assured that the potentialities of his nature cannot be completely suppressed. If a man has been illumined by the celestial light at his very entrance into life, when, as I have already said, not a spark of judgment is active, and has been able to find a safe road or one whose dangers are slight and easily avoided, he has reason for everlasting gratitude to God. For one whose fortune has been less auspicious greater trouble is in store. Yet once he has

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begun to open his eyes and to understand what a crooked path he is traveling, let him bend all his energy to correct, even though it be in old age, the follies and errors of his youth, and let him recall the old man in Terence,[3] an excellent example of reformation in old age and a source at once of profit and delight. Though the undertaking is not particularly easy, it is notably profitable and by no means impossible. No action should be considered as coming too late when it is recognized as wholesome, and for this view there are some authorities not to be despised. Augustus Cæsar, the most philosophical of princes, says, "What is done well enough is done speedily enough,"[4] and Plato, the prince of philosophers, says, "Happy is the man whose fortune it is even in old age to attain wisdom and truth."[5]

Chapter 3. What course is to be kept in the order and plan of reformation

IN EVERY well-ordered plan for reforming one's life it is especially important to keep in view that we are to be guided not by idle wishes but by our character and predisposition, and that we are to follow not the road which looks most attractive but the one which is best suited to our needs. In this connection I require that a man shall be particularly honest and exacting in passing judgment on himself and not prone to be led astray by the delusive temptations of eye and ear. I know that it has happened to some men that in their admiration for the qualities of others they have lost the consciousness of their own limitations, and attempting actions that are remote from their powers, they have provided matter of mirth to strangers. One admonition that I have derived from the philosophers is that each man should note the

[3] Demea in the "*Adelphi*." See ll. 855 ff.
[4] *Suetonius*, Book ii, Ch. 25.
[5] *Laws*, 653A. Quoted from Cicero, *De Finibus*, Book v.

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relation between his own character and habits and a given mode of life, whether it be the retired life or life in the city or any other manner of life, and understand which is best suited for himself. If this is advantageous to those who are just entering upon life, how much more so must it be to those who have advanced in it, since in addition to the trouble of choosing they are also faced with the task of destroying old and firmly rooted notions. As for me, who, as far as I am aware, have nothing in common with the crowd and whose attainment in literature, while not so great as to puff up the mind, is enough to give it pleasure and to make me a friend of that solitude in which I acquired it without the intervention of a wordy teacher and without obstinate laziness, (would I could say without persecution from envy), whom neither sweetheart nor wife, neither bond nor interest nor guardianship nor chance of profit, neither the rostrum nor the bath, neither the tavern nor the banquet nor the public square could tie down to the city—as for me, I say, whose attitude, to tell the truth, was decided not so much by a deliberate resolve of my own or the advice of others as by a natural prompting of my disposition, my unusually retired life has been not only one of superior tranquillity but also of conspicuous dignity and security. My counsel to other men to take account of their condition is precisely what I have employed in arriving at an understanding of my own. I heartily embrace and cling to solitude and leisure, about which I have conversed with you so much today, as if they were ladders to the level toward which the mind strives to ascend, and I dread crowds and busy cares as though they were bolts and bars to my freedom.

But when some need compels me to dwell in the city, I have learned to create a solitude among people and a haven of refuge in the midst of a tempest, using a device, not generally known, of so controlling the senses that they do not perceive what they perceive. Long after I had developed it into a habit by my own experimentation, I discovered that it was also the advice of a very brilliant and learned writer, and I committed it to memory all the

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more eagerly because of my joy at finding that a practice of mine was supported by the authority of antiquity. It is Quintilian, in that book in which with great elegance he has put the finishing touches on the education of the orator, previously set forth with such beauty by Cicero, who says: "Study by the lamp, when we come to it fresh and vigorous, is the best kind of retirement. But silence and seclusion, and entire freedom of mind, though in the highest degree desirable, cannot always fall to our lot; and therefore we must not, if any noise disturbs us, immediately throw aside our books, and deplore the day as lost, but we must strive against inconveniences, and acquire such habits, that our application may set all interruptions at defiance; for if we direct our attention, with our whole mental energy, to the work actually before us, nothing of all that strikes our eyes or ears will penetrate into the mind. Does a casual train of thought often cause us not to see persons in our way, and to wander from our road, and shall we not attain the same abstraction if we resolve to do so? We must not yield to excuses for idleness; for if we fancy that we must not study except when we are fresh, except when we are in good spirits, except when we are free from all other cares, we shall always have some reason for self-indulgence. In the midst of crowds, therefore, on a journey, and even at festive meetings, let thought secure for herself privacy."[6]

I have quoted this passage the more gladly because it is not too well known. Seneca's letter on the subject is more familiar, and I shall therefore cite only its conclusion. After discussing at length the way in which the mind of the student should endure the disturbances of the crowd, he finally asks himself, "Is it not sometimes a simpler matter just to avoid the uproar?" And answering his own question, he says, "I admit this. Accordingly I shall change from my present quarters,"[7] as if all that he had previously said was only by way of consolation in cases of compulsory sojourn, while his final advice was for

[6] Bk. x, Ch. 3, §§ 27-30 (J. S. Watson's translation).
[7] *Epistles*, 56.

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voluntary withdrawal. And this is in fact the truth. For I also have found only this recourse in my need, that in the midst of the turmoil of cities I create for myself in thought, as far as I may, an imaginary solitude in some retreat and by an effort of the mind triumph over my situation. This manner of remedy I have often used hitherto, but whether I shall resort to it again I do not know, since the future is always uncertain. Assuredly, if my choice were free, I should seek solitude in her own retreat.

Chapter 4. The praise of solitude

THIS I have done while I could, and you shall see how eagerly I shall continue to do it. Solitude is indeed something holy, innocent, incorruptible, and the purest of all human possessions. To whom does she reveal herself amid forests, for whom does she display her charms and thorns? Whom, unless it be the fishes, does she deceive with a bait? Whom, apart from wild beasts and birds, does she entangle in her nets and snares? Whom does she allure with song or graceful motion? Whom does she fascinate with her colors? For whom does she weave the purple, to whom does she sell the oil, for whom wreathe garlands of flowery speech? With whom, finally, does she ingratiate herself, whom does she seek to please, except the person who has penetrated the inmost recesses of solitude and for whom therefore there is no solitude? She aims to deceive no one; she neither simulates nor dissimulates; she adorns nothing, she glosses nothing, she pretends nothing. She is utterly naked and unadorned, for she is averse to garish exhibitions and vulgar plaudits such as are poisonous to the life of the spirit and of all things. She has God for sole witness and puts her trust not in the voice of the blind and unreliable multitude but in her own conscience. At times she even reposes small faith in her conscience and remains per-

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plexed, recalling that it is written, "Who can understand his errors?"[8] and again, "If I am perfect, yet would I not know my soul."[9] Nor is she forgetful that "the Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works,"[10] that "the Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down,"[11] that he is "nigh unto all them that call upon him,"[12] that "he has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."[13] Finally he looks upon us as a father and not as a judge, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth," and his life is fleeting as a shadow. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting,"[14] since he has made us and none of the works of his hands is hateful to him.[15] And so while the Scriptures breathe threats on the one hand and extend hope on the other, she remains doubtful of her merit and does not know whether she is deserving of love or hatred, but trembles and hopes and comforts herself with the assurance of the mercy of her king. Thus watchful of the devil's wiles and with her mind fixed on one thing only, she looks about her, and leaning on divine support she makes light of the danger. Thus she is happy and composed and, in a manner of speaking, a fortified citadel and a haven against storms. If any one fails to take advantage of such a refuge what result can he expect but to find himself without a haven, be tossed about in a sea of troubles, live upon rocks, and perish in the waves?

I am not, however, so unreasonable in my attitude or so narrowly attached to my view as to think all others

[8] *Psalms*, xix, 12.
[9] *Job*, ix, 21.
[10] *Psalms*, cv, 9.
[11] *Ibid.*, cv, 14.
[12] *Ibid.*, cv, 18.
[13] *Ibid.*, ciii, 10-12.
[14] *Ibid.*, ciii, 13-17.
[15] *Wisdom*, xi, 24.

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foolish or to compel them to pledge fealty to my doctrine. Many may be brought to profess, but no one can be forced to believe. There is nothing more vital than independence of judgment; as I claim it for myself I would not deny it to others. I grant you (for it is possible) that every man's purpose is honorable and sacred; I would not constitute myself the judge of the deep and hidden mysteries of the human conscience. All men with the grace of God may lead a good life; the infinite clemency spurns none, though it is spurned by many. Even in the practice of human philosophy there are gradations of virtue. Everyone cannot hold the highest place, otherwise all the lower ones would be unoccupied. But all who have determined to lead their life, in whatsoever calling, out of the reach of ill report, must at least keep free from the indecency and sordidness which are generally found in low conditions. To avoid indecency is a duty, to have high aspiration is virtue, to attain it is felicity.

Chapter 5. On the fourfold distinction of virtues introduced by Plotinus and approved by Macrobius

I AM not unaware of the celebrated distinction of the virtues into four kinds introduced by Plotinus, the great Platonist,[16] and approved by Macrobius. Even with them, however, the political virtues occupy the lowest stage. These virtues may belong to busy men, but not to all of them, only to those the end of whose activity is their own virtue and, to a much greater extent, the welfare of the state. You see how with a single word the whole enormous host of busy men is reduced to a very small number. The purgatorial virtues occupy the next step above. These are the embellishment of those who, freely forsaking cities, become men of leisure and true followers of philosophy; they eradicate from the mind the passions

[16] *First Ennead*, Bk. ii.

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which are only moderated in the case of the former. The virtues of the third stage are higher than those that are termed the virtues of a purified mind; their property is freedom from those passions which the political virtues have mitigated and the purgatorial ones removed. These are the virtues of perfect men. Where such men are to be found I know not, but if they have ever existed they have surely loved solitude, and if one of them still survives, though with his virtues for a rudder he may sail the high seas in safety, I think nevertheless that he too loves the haven of solitude. The fourth and highest is the place of the exemplary virtues, which are above the reach of man and dwell, as it is said, in the mind of God alone. It is maintained that the three other kinds of human virtue are derived from this fourth as from an immutable pattern, as its very name suggests, or, following Plato, from the ideas of the virtues which along with other ideas Plato fixed in the mind of God. It is not enough to say that these virtues do not exert the same influence on the passions as the others; to utter the word passion in connection with them is the height of profanity and sacrilege. I should have said nothing about them, for they have no connection with my theme, but since the occasion prompted me to say something about the political and purgatorial virtues I did not care to break and untwine the chain which Plotinus had woven with so much art.

Chapter 6. The delight and sweetness of the solitary life and the spiritual conflict of the solitary man

DO YOU see how I have striven with a roundabout profusion of words to reenter into favor with the man of action? But it is now time to set a limit to these digressions. I shall return to myself and to solitude. I could wish that I had drunk more deeply of its true and intimate sweetness, that I might more confident-

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ly converse with you in this discourse. A worldly mind is ashamed to speak of sacred things. Who indeed is able to express in words what he scarcely realizes in thought? It is presumptuous for an earthly—I might say a mere earthly—creature to speak of a life celestial and truly angelic, having been ravished by the sole enchantment of its name and the bare report of its perfection, and, to speak truly, having but faintly smelled its aroma without getting a taste of its flavor. It is exactly as if a shepherd who was born in the woods and brought up in the woods, accustomed to satisfy his thirst in the brook and his hunger on roots, to draw his food from the ground and take his rest in an overgrown cave, should blunder by some accident upon the walls of a vast and opulent city and, while he sits wearily at the entrance and turns his eyes eagerly in all directions and thrusts his gaze into the city itself, actually seeing only the houses of the watchmen or some alley that lies close to the gate, should return to the woods and recount to his friends what he had beheld in that city, in its palaces and streets, its courts and public squares, in the shops of the artisans and the halls of the nobility, and the business that was being transacted in its public and private conferences. Or it is as if one who has barely reached the threshold of some sacred temple should think that he knows in what secret recesses every vestment and holy vessel is kept concealed and understands all the forms of the books, the duties of the priests, and the whole sacred ceremonial. In reality how do I differ from this shepherd, except that he has approached the city or the temple but once while I have paid frequent visits to solitude; he has stood on the outside while I have ventured within; he has departed promptly while I have lingered? And yet what greater certainty have I as to the inner nature of the life of solitude? Caves, hills, and groves lie equally open to everybody; no one blocks the way when you would enter or expels you after you have entered; the wilderness has neither porter nor watchman. But of what avail is it merely to

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go to a place or to be carried along winding streams? What advantage is there in strolling through woods and what delight in sitting upon mountains, if wherever I go my mind follows me, the same among the woods as in the city? It is the mind that I must lay aside before all; it is the mind, I say, that I must leave at home, humbly imploring the Lord to make my heart pure within me and to establish an upright spirit in my body. Then at last shall I penetrate to the hidden recesses of the solitary life.

As for my present solitude—why should I boast of what I do not possess? It is not that solitary life for which I yearn, although outwardly it bears a near resemblance, being equally withdrawn from the human crowd but not equally emancipated from human passions. Oh, could I but behold that ineffable sweetness which is felt by blessed souls at the remembrance of the struggles they have passed through and the prospect of the joys to come, whether by those who have triumphed over the enemy or by those who, while they have often got the upper hand, have not yet vanquished him completely. These are still called upon to stand in battle array but not without sure hope of triumph, and to fight, not alone, but aided by the company of angels. And when they have put on the armor of God, wearing, if I may imitate the language of the Apostle, "the breast-plate of righteousness," "the shield of faith," "the sword of the spirit," and "the helmet of salvation," they go forth repeatedly to wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,"[17] with no mortal looking on, but before a great presence of heavenly spirits who favor them with their countenance while Christ himself presides over the combat. What a welcome peace to the exhausted mind is there in those sighs rising out of the depths of the soul to highest heaven! What secret relief in the tears gushing from the purest fountain of the heart! What watches and vigils

[17] *Ephesians*, vi, 12-17.

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of the soldiers of Christ on the towers of Jerusalem and the ramparts of Zion against the hosts of Babylon as they sing their psalms through the entire night and maintain the guard over their walled encampment, knowing that they are in a strong and well fortified place where neither food nor drink is lacking, believing that while they may be assailed by the stratagems of the enemy, they cannot be overcome, and feeling themselves so exalted in grace that the fiercest onslaughts of the foe are a boon to them and a punishment to the assailants, as an action which is superfluous with regard to our safety may often be directed to the increase of our glory. And thus exercising itself, the army of Christ's champions, battling in the arena of this life, grows more wary, its victory becomes more impressive, its triumph more glorious.

Chapter 7. The comfort and joy of hoping for the perpetual company of the angels as a reward for the brief withdrawal from men

WHAT a comfort and delight it is to enjoy the present and yet look forward to a better state, in place of a brief retirement from human society to partake of the perpetual companionship of the angels and the gaze of the divine countenance in which is the end of all holy longings and desires; instead of a few tears to have laughter without end, instead of earthly fasting eternal feasting, true and inestimable riches in lieu of self-imposed poverty, the freedom of the ethereal city in place of a forest habitation, the starry palaces of Christ in exchange for a smoky hut, the choiring of angels and the sweetness of celestial harmony in place of the silence of the woods, and, transcending all other

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melodies, to hear the voice of God as the faithful, trusted pledge of all these blessings when, after so many labors done, he calls his children to eternal rest! To reflect day after day upon what I have left and what I have gained, what I endure and what I look forward to, what I have sown and what I shall reap! To consider with what little waste of time—I should not say with waste but with what gain and escape from many irksome distractions, eternal felicity will soon be won, and that no sooner do we abandon the sickly appetites of men and the dangers of cities, in which exists that true hell of living men of which the Psalmist speaks, and hasten to our heavenly fatherland, than our happiness begins! Indeed the end of unhappiness is the beginning of happiness, since the nature of opposites demands that where one ceases the other should begin. Finally, there is the joy of having elevated thoughts, and conversing with comrades of the spirit, and beatific visions, and of often commanding the presence of Christ in intimate communion. For he is always present, since he is always in all places. Is it not he of whom it is written, "If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take up the wings of morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea—"?[18] He to whom it was easy to endow us with eyes and ears and understanding, surely finds it easier to see and hear and understand us. He sees us therefore and hears us even before we speak. For though Moses was silent the Lord said to him, "Wherefore criest thou unto me?"[19] He forestalls our wishes and anticipates the movements of our hearts. He knows our thoughts from afar, long before they are formed. He answers our prayers before they are uttered and he beholds our needs before they appear. He sees the day of our death before we are born, but even though he finds us unworthy he regards us with pity, unless, which heaven forbid, we repel his mercy with headstrong contumacy.

[18] *Psalms*, cxxxix, 8-9.
[19] *Exodus*, xiv, 15.

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Chapter 8. Having Christ for our faithful witness we need no imaginary witness

HAVING our Father therefore for witness and judge, we are not in need of that imaginary witness of whom I have written elsewhere and whom some philosophers have admonished us to seek. Epicurus, for example, who, though he stands in ill repute with some, is nevertheless held in great esteem by others who are themselves estimable men, writing to a friend, bids him act in all things as though Epicurus were looking on. Cicero, in the letter which he addresses to his brother Quinctus, after some impressive exhortations to virtue, ends as follows: "You will achieve this very easily if you think of me as being always with you and taking an interest in everything that you say and do, since it has always been your aim to please me more than all the rest of the world."[20] He must have had very great confidence in the advantage of his real presence to his brother when he could regard the mere recollection of it as having such an influence on the pursuit of virtue. In imitation of these examples Seneca admonishes his Lucilius to imagine the presence of some illustrious persons, not venturing to offer himself as a model. "There is no real doubt," he says, "that it is good for one to have appointed a guardian over oneself, and to have some one whom you may look up to, some one whom you may regard as a witness of your thoughts."[21] Shortly after he adds, "Act, in whatever you do, as you would act if anyone at all were looking on;" and a little further on, "Set as a guard over yourself the authority of some man, whether your choice be the great Cato, or Scipio, or Lælius,—or any man in whose presence even abandoned wretches would check their bad impulses." That it may be clear

[20] *Epistles*, ad Quinctum F. 1, 46.
[21] *Epistles*, 25.

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that he is here preaching Epicurean doctrine, I shall cite a remark of Seneca's from another place to this effect. "'Cherish some man of high character, and keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them.' Such, my dear Lucilius, is the counsel of Epicurus; he has quite properly given us a guardian and an attendant."[22] Then, after inserting some examples in support of this advice, he adds, "Choose therefore a Cato; or, if Cato seems too severe a model, choose some Lælius, a gentler spirit. Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you." You see that he names a number of persons and leaves us free to choose whom we like, provided our choice falls upon one whom we admire not for his family, his power, or his wealth, but for his virtue and conversation, for a face which is the witness of a noble spirit, and for words which move the mind to worthy deeds. While this advice of the philosophers about an imaginary witness of one's life is not without profit to people in their condition, it is not necessary for us. I have given it this place in the book that by what I have said it may become clear that a Christian does not need such a witness, that he does not have to imagine the presence of Epicurus or Cicero or Cato or Scipio or Lælius, since a good angel is provided for him as guardian and companion of his life, under whose gaze, if he has any sense of shame, he will not dare to do what he would not dare before a man. To say something even more impressive and awe-inspiring, Christ himself is present in all places and at all times, a faithful witness not only of our deeds but of all our thoughts as well, and thoughts could not be seen by Epicurus even if he were present in the flesh.

At this juncture I am inclined to arrest the current of my thought and reflect whether any person has ever been so close to the verge of madness and so abandoned

[22] *Epistles*, 11.

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in sin as not to put a tight rein upon his violent and careering lusts when he felt that he was in the presence,—I will not say of Christ—only of some friend of Christ. And yet there is absolutely no Christian who doubts that Christ himself is always present in the most secret recesses of the soul, examines what goes on there and sees everything as though it were openly exposed, and who does not refrain from every unseemly act on account of the dread and veneration of such a witness. What a delusion it is that, because we do not see with our eyes the presence which we acknowledge in our hearts, we should slip back into the error of which Cicero, who surely did not know Christ, arraigned the ancients when he said that they saw nothing with their minds but referred everything to their bodily eyes.[23] And if we too fall into this case and look for counsel, we must give heed to the same Cicero, not because other authorities are lacking, even among writers of our own faith, (seeing that Augustine composed his book *On the True Religion* chiefly from this point of view), but because there is an advantage in hearing what a stranger, if I may call him so, has to say on this subject, especially since in a single passage he both exexposes the wound and applies the remedy. "It is in the power of a large intellect," he says, "to free itself from the senses and draw our thoughts away from our prejudices."[24] Let us too, therefore, apply ourselves with all our strength, and having subjugated our senses and got the better of our habits, view things with our intelligence. Let us open at last those inward eyes by which things invisible are beheld and clear away the mists that have obscured them and we shall see that Christ is actually with us. If Cato was ashamed to die with a groan because one was by to see, how much greater shame shall we feel, if Christ looks on, to live badly and die badly, or to commit any base or dishonorable deed in so awful a presence?

[23] *Tusculans*, Bk. i, Ch. 16.
[24] *Ibid.*, Bk. i, Ch. 16.

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But to bring the discussion back to the subject, he is in truth our infallible and perpetual witness, and though he is present everywhere he never deigns to grace us more fully with his presence, to listen and converse with us more intimately than in solitude. And no wonder, for there no one breaks in with his clamor and nothing distracts the mind from its absorption, and so the human spirit accustoms itself to celestial contemplation, by continuous intercourse acquires confidence in its salvation, and from a guest and stranger becomes a member of God's household. For from great love and unremitting, faithful service there grows up an intimacy between God and man such as is not known between man and man. Therefore, just as it is my faith that the restless men who are always entangled in worldly troubles and completely immersed in earthly affairs are already having a foretaste of their activities in the life immortal and of the labors of hell, so I believe it to be equally true that the solitary souls who are the friends of God and habituated to pious moods begin in this life to feel the delights of the life eternal. Nor should I say that it was beyond belief that any one of their number, to whom there clings no trace of the dust of this world, should be raised up with the assistance of the divine mercy to such a height that, though still confined to earth, he may hear the chorus of angels singing harmoniously in heaven and behold in an ecstasy of mind what he is unable to express when he comes back to himself. But what can I know or say about all these things, unhappy sinner that I am, dragging about with me the ball and chain of my iniquities? My love of a spot favorable to literary leisure springs no doubt from my love of books, or perhaps I seek to escape from the crowd because of an aversion arising from a discrepancy in our tastes, or it may even be that from a squeamishness of conscience I like to avoid a many-tongued witness of my life.

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Chapter 9. Of the freedom of the solitary man and of mental employments

THEREFORE let us pass over these considerations, although, beloved Jesus, we have been created by you to the end that we may find our peace in you; for this we were born and without it our life is unhappy and unavailing. How much value, my father, do you set upon these common things: to live according to your pleasure, to go where you will, to stay where you will; in the spring to repose amid purple beds of flowers, in the autumn amid heaps of fallen leaves; to cheat the winter by basking in the sun and the summer by taking refuge in cool shades, and to feel the force of neither unless it is your choice! To belong to yourself in all seasons and wherever you are to be ever with yourself, far from evil, far from examples of wickedness! Not to be driven along, not to be dashed aside, not to be tormented, not to be pressed, not to be dragged to a banquet when you prefer not to eat, or to be forced to speak when you would rather be silent, not to be held up at crossings with importunate greetings and handshaking, and with a crude and tasteless kind of urbanity to linger in torture for days at a time making obeisance to passers-by! What fellow looks with gaping mouth upon you as though you were some monster? Who comes to a halt when he meets you? Who turns around and sticks at your heels, either whispering something hoarsely in the ear of his companion or questioning a passer-by concerning you? Who is there that offensively jostles you in a crowd or somewhat more offensively gives place to you? Who extends his hand to you or puts it to his head in recognition? Who sets himself to hold long talk with you in the narrow streets? Who signals to you silently with the eye and goes by with lips compressed? Finally, think what it means not to grow old among objects of disgust, to squeeze and to be squeezed

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amid dancing throngs, to have your breath cut short or inflated with noxious mists, to sweat, though it is the middle of winter; not to unlearn humanity among men, and through satiety of feeling to hate things, hate people, hate business, hate whom you love, hate yourself; not to forget your own concerns that you may be free to serve the ungrateful many! Yet all this is without prejudice to the saying of the Apostle in his letter to the Romans, that "none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord."[25] And so you must live and die as if you lived and died unto the Lord and to no other. To stand meanwhile as though on a high tower watching the troubled actions of men beneath your feet, to see all things in this world and yourself along with them passing away, not to feel old age as an affliction which has silently stolen upon you before you suspected that it was so close, as generally happens with busy men, but to expect it long in advance and be prepared for it with a sound body and a serene mind; to know that this life is but the shadow of life, that it is not home but an inn, not the fatherland but a road, not a chamber of rest but an arena; not to love fleeting things but to desire things that endure and to submit patiently to circumstances; always to remember that you are a mortal but one who enjoys the promise of immortality; to travel back in memory and to range in imagination through all ages and all lands; to move about at will and converse with all the glorious men of the past and so to lose consciousness of those who work all evils in the present; sometimes to rise, with thoughts that are lifted above yourself, to the ethereal region, to meditate on what goes on there and by meditation to inflame your desire, and in turn to encourage and admonish yourself with a fervent spirit as though with the power of burning words—these are not the least important fruits of the solitary life, though those who are without experience in it do not appreciate it. While I am speaking of these, however, let me not pass over in

[25] *Rom.* xiv: 8.

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silence the more obvious pleasures: to devote oneself to reading and writing, alternately finding employment and relief in each, to read what our forerunners have written and to write what later generations may wish to read, to pay to posterity the debt which we cannot pay to the dead for the gift of their writings, and yet not remain altogether ungrateful to the dead but to make their names more popular if they are little known, to restore them if they have been forgotten, to dig them out if they have been buried in the ruins of time and to hand them down to our grandchildren as objects of veneration, to carry them in the heart and as something sweet in the mouth, and finally, by cherishing, remembering, and celebrating their fame in every way, to pay them the homage that is due to their genius even though it is not commensurate with their greatness.

Chapter 10. How divine honors were awarded to the inventors of certain arts

WE HEAR that the inventors of certain arts after their death have been worshipped with the honors of deity. This shows more of gratitude than of piety, for there is no piety in any act that offends God; but the ill-advised gratitude of mortals, not content with bestowing human honors to commemorate benefits to the human race, has committed the folly of sacrilege. The harp has made a god of Apollo, medicine has made gods of both Apollo and Æsculapius, agriculture of Saturn, Bacchus, and Ceres, the forge of Vulcan. Egypt worships Osiris and the learned city of Athens Minerva, because the former is reported to have discovered the use of flax, the latter that of oil as well as the art of weaving. It would be a long task to particularize, for there is no limit to this sort of vanity among the ancients. The

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greatest and most careful of their poets does not dare openly to condemn it, fearing perhaps the punishment that would be visited on him, but secretly he has not been afraid to mock it, and with no little refinement, since he has placed in the lower regions the souls of those beings who have advanced human life by the arts they have invented and whose names the false multitude, the fountain of all errors, has raised to heaven in spite of the anger of the Lord of heaven. He recites specifically how the discoverer of healing himself was hurled down to the Stygian waters by the thunder of almighty God. But let this remain a question among the ancients; among us there is no talk of gods. And yet I can never cease marvelling that men in all other respects so perfect should be so foolish in their superstitions, like very swift runners moving in the wrong direction and not seeing the good directly before their eyes. I marvel at their perversity, but I pity their blindness.

If in truth some honor is due to the discoverers of things of this sort—and I do not deny that great honor is due, provided it be human and reasonable—what glory shall be showered upon the inventors of literature and the noble arts, who have provided us not with a plow to make furrows, nor woven garments for our bodies, nor tinkling lyres for our ears, nor oil and wine for our gullets—though to be sure our ears and gullets take pleasure in the sounds and tastes—but have furnished us with nobler instruments wherewith to procure nourishment, raiment, instruction, and healing for the mind? Moreover, I ask, where can this debt most effectively be paid? Who doubts that this pursuit of literature, by means of which we consecrate our own name or that of another, carving statues of illustrious men much more enduring than bronze or marble, can be carried on nowhere more successfully or more freely than in solitude? Here at least I speak from experience, for I know what spurs it supplies to the mind, what wings for the spirit, what leisure time for work—things which I know not where to seek save in solitude. And if you do not take my word for it when I

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say that leisure or freedom, call it what you will, is the source of literature and the arts, you may trust Aristotle who in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, declaring the reason why the mathematical arts were so highly celebrated among the Egyptians, says that it was because of the leisure that was offered to the race of priests. Plato too has not omitted to note, speaking of these people in the *Timaeus*, that being entrusted with priestly functions they remain apart from the rest of the people in order to preserve their purity unpolluted from profane contact. One of our own priests, Cheremon the Stoic,[26] a very eloquent writer, describing their mode of life, says that they put aside all business and thoughts of the world and lived always in the temple, studying nature and its causes and making computations of the stars, that they never consorted with women, never saw their near kin or even their children after they had once entered upon the service of the divine cult, and regularly abstained from flesh and wine. He adds that they were accustomed severely to suppress and correct the bodily humors which might develop from idleness or inaction by not eating for two or three days, and he relates many other things about their food, drink, and sleep. By habits like these I can easily believe that they acquired a certain divine fertility of intellect.

[26]Librarian of the Alexandrian Library and afterwards tutor of Nero.

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THE FIFTH TRACTATE

Of those who impugn the life of solitude and of certain instructions and consolations to the solitary

Chapter 1. Reasons why some people blame the solitary life

I AM not unaware that I shall be violently attacked at this point by those who think solitude is unfavorable to literature and the virtuous life. They maintain in the first place that in solitude the instructors are absent who are as it were the propagators of literature and, if I may use the expression, the nurses of tender minds, without whose continual help no striking talent was ever developed. But in saying this they assume that I am addressing myself to children instead of to those who have long dispensed with the schoolmaster's ferule. Still they insist earnestly and declare that even in learned men the mind is distracted by a view which stretches out in all directions and by too open a sky. No man of learning will deny that when some great work is in hand the energies must be reined in and collected as with a swift horse whom you are preparing for a great leap. Quintilian is authority for this idea who, in the ninth book, if I am not mistaken, of his *Institutes of Oratory*, though he unmistakably agrees with me in saying that a private and secluded spot and the deepest silence are particularly suitable for writers and declares that no one disputes it, immediately after makes a remark which seems at variance with my opinion. "Yet," he says, "we are not therefore necessarily to listen to those who think that groves and woods are the

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most proper places for study, because the free and open sky, as they say, and the beauty of sequestered spots give elevation to the mind and a happy warmth to the imagination. To me, assuredly, such retirement seems rather conducive to pleasure than an incentive to literary exertion; for the very objects that delight us must, of necessity, divert our attention from the work which we designed to pursue; for the mind cannot, in truth, attend effectually to many things at once, and in whatever direction it looks off, it must cease to contemplate what had been intended for its employment."[1] This is to all appearances spoken with sufficient clearness, and yet in order to make you understand how strongly he feels in the matter, he insists upon the point and repeats it. "The pleasantness, therefore, of the woods, the streams gliding past, the breezes sporting among the branches of the trees, the songs of birds, and the very freedom of the extended prospect, draw off our attention to them; so that all such gratification seems to me more adapted to relax the thoughts than to brace them."[2] Here then a witness not to be despised comes in judgment against me, and as though he did not sufficiently trust his own authority, he brings forth in support of his opinion the practice of Demosthenes, a man not known to common fame but the unrivalled chief of Greek eloquence. "Demosthenes," he says, "acted more wisely, who secluded himself in a place where no voice could be heard, and no prospect contemplated, that his eyes might not oblige his mind to attend to anything else besides his business."[3] O thou zealous devotee and worshipper of the woods, some one will remark, here is a man who thinks that woods and mountains, far from being helpful to the student, are a distinct hindrance to his activity. And what answer shall I make? Shall I deny either that Quintilian spoke correctly or that Demosthenes acted wisely? I should prefer, if I could not convert them to my side of the argument, to go over to theirs. To agree, indeed, would be safer than to dispute, for I could very easily turn aside the attack

[1] *Institutes*, Bk. x, Ch. 3, 22-23.
[2] *Ibid.*, 24.
[3] *Ibid.*, 25.

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on the ground that they were both orators, though one was famous and the other supreme. It is quite true that there is no class of students to whom woods and all the things we are here talking about and solitude in general are less suitable, (as I shall show more explicitly when I come to the examples), but I am not of a mind to avoid the issue. I am neither for flight nor for war, I look for conciliation. And so, though I nowhere feel my mind working more happily than in the woods and mountains, though nowhere do great thoughts occur to me more readily—if indeed a great thought ever does occur to me—or words rise up so adequate to my ideas, I am nevertheless reluctant to set up what may be peculiar to myself as a truth for all and to condemn the practice of such great men as I have named, preferring rather to embrace both views and to demonstrate that neither is hostile to our purpose. I do not require that students should write their books in the woods or mountains, but I permit them to withdraw their minds, after refreshing them with the sight of these, to some silent and concealed recess. Who is there, however partial he may be to cities, who does not recognize that such places can be found nowhere more conveniently than in solitude? I make no objection to those who command that a writer shall choose a dark and silent place, only let not him who works by the light of the lamp despise the advice given to those who work by daylight. In this particular both you and I, my learned father, have tested the profitable advice of Quintilian, and I shall communicate it to the reader. In praising this habit of Demosthenes he closes by saying, "As for those who study by lamplight, therefore, let the silence of the night, the closed chamber, and a single light keep them as it were wholly in seclusion."[4] You will admit that none of these things, as I look at the matter, are at variance with the state of solitude, that they all, in fact, promote it. If therefore among such great authorities I too may be heard and new counsel is not despised, I shall

[4] *Institutes*, x, 3, 25.

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both follow them and, going further, if the choice of situation is free, shall offer some original advice to such as circumscribe themselves within the example of Demosthenes.

Chapter 2. Woods, fields, and streams are of great advantage to the solitary

LET provision first be made that, after the prosperous conclusion of his mental toil, one may be enabled to put off the burden of his weariness by having easy access to woods and fields and, what is especially grateful to the Muses, to the bank of a murmuring stream, and at the same time to sow the seeds of new projects in the field of his genius, and in the very interval of rest and recuperation prepare matter for the labor to come. It is an employment at once profitable and pleasant, an active rest and a restful work, so that when he returns to that narrow and secret chamber favored by Demosthenes, he may eliminate all that is superfluous and give the desired perfection of expression to the germinating thought. In this way not a moment of time will pass with any waste or loss to the student. This should apply particularly to those who compose oratorical discourses or histories, for I deem that those who ponder philosophy, and even more those who brood on poetry, whose minds are given to refined and subtle thought rather than to collecting many facts, must be left to their own devices. Let these follow the impulse of their genius, in the assurance that their minds will respond, no matter where place and time invite them, wherever they feel themselves strongly incited by the goad of their inspiration, whether it be under the open sky or the roof of a locked house, within the shelter of a solid rock or beneath the shade of a spreading pine. They have no need of turning over many books, for they can read in memory the books they have read before and often even compose in their minds what

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they have omitted to read, but they raise themselves aloft on the wings of their genius, for they must needs be carried away with more than human rapture if they would speak with more than human power. This, I have observed, is without doubt achieved most effectively and happily in free and open places. Wherefore I have often looked upon a mountain song as if it were a frolicking goat, the gayest and choicest in the whole flock, and being reminded of its origin by its native grace, I have said to myself,

> Thou hast tasted the grass of the Alps, thou comest from above.

But to make an end of this point at last, both Cicero and Virgil, without cavil the chiefs of Latin eloquence, adhered to this practice. The former on many occasions, but especially when he came to compose his treatise on the Civil Laws, sought out leafy oaks and delicious retreats for his labor, and I remember that he makes mention there of a shady bank and lofty poplars, and the caroling of birds,[5] and the rippling of waters,[6] and a little island very like this one of mine in the middle of a stream which it cuts in half.[7] And Virgil when about to celebrate in a pastoral poem his Alexis, whoever he may be, did it walking continually,

> Where, piles of shadows, thick the beeches rose,[8]

alone among the mountains and the woods. Both imitated Plato who carried on the discussion about his Republic and Laws amidst calm cypress groves and sylvan spaces. But I report matters that are doubtless of familiar knowledge. Cyprian, a good deal after these men in

[5] *De Legibus*, i, 15.
[6] *Ibid.*, i, 21.
[7] *Ibid.*, ii, 6.
[8] *Eclogues*, 2, 3 (Calverley's translation).

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time but before them in faith, illustrious for his martyrdom and not undistinguished for literary skill, seems to have thought and written the same thing. There is one passage from his many writings which his great admirer Augustine cited as evidence of his intellect and an example of his style, wishing to make it clear to us by this citation to what a height his eloquence might have reached if he had not been wholly concerned with the weight of his matter and neglected the ornaments of expression. Speaking in this passage of the employment of the mind, he does not ask for a chamber in a secret spot, girt about with walls, secured with locks, darkened and concealed by a marble vault, or any such thing, but "Come," he says, "let us seek this abode. The adjoining solitude provides us with a retreat, where the vines straying and drooping in pendulous coils, as they crawl over the supporting reeds, form a portico with their shoots and a house of leaves."[9] See what sort of porch and what sort of abode this holy and eloquent man asked for—vines and branches and leaves and reeds, and amidst all these the privacy ever dear to the studious. Surely he would not have desired this if he believed that the mind was happy in no retreat outside of walls and a roof. I might seek for the same evidence in other writers and establish my point with the testimony of many more, if I were not afraid of its being said that the smallness of my faith was proved by the number of my authorities and that I took more trouble than was need. Thus far I have set forth my opinion with the idea that none who read it, if indeed there be any so rich in leisure as to read the product of my leisure, should think that I have been establishing a rule for their minds. Let them rather examine the truth of the matter in detail and not feel bound to take me or any one else on faith but only trust the evidence of their own experience.

[9] *De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk. v, Ch. 14 (quoting Cyprian, *Epistles*, 1 ad Donatum).

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Chapter 3. The interpretation of the words of Seneca in which he seems to impugn solitude

BUT it seems now that those who maintain solitude to be unfavorable to the virtues have Annæus Seneca among others for their warrant, who in a certain passage of his Epistles says that "solitude prompts us to all kinds of evil,"[10] and again that in solitude all wicked plots are fomented, all dishonest passions marshalled, insolence inflamed, lust excited, and violence provoked.[11] If these things were spoken generally and at large, there would be no recourse but either to oppose Seneca or desert the cause of solitude. But this is not the situation, for it is clearer than daylight from Seneca's own words that he speaks only of those who are stupid and a prey to their passions. "When persons are in mourning," he says, "or fearful about something, we are accustomed to watch them that we may prevent them from making a wrong use of their loneliness."[12] You perceive that solitude is forbidden to such a one, but pay heed to the reason: it is probably because of melancholy and sickly fear, the most consuming of mental passions. Developing this point more at length, he says, "No thoughtless person ought to be left alone." Who does not see how entirely true this is? For as soon as a man who is not master of his will is left to himself, he is bound to come to grief. But for such people I judge that it is not merely solitude that is dangerous; the city too is not a wholesome place for them, though in one way it is more wholesome. For the city, while it contains the agents of crime, also has its prosecutors and avengers, but solitude by the hope it offers of concealment and impunity banishes the fear of law and regard for honor. Solitude

[10] *Epistles*, 25.
[11] *Ibid.*, 10.
[12] *Ibid.*

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affords the privilege of shameless sinning while the city supplies the elements that promote crime, and therefore both are alike mischievous. But that is the perversity of nature and not the fault of solitude. You may convince yourself that this is unquestionably true and that Seneca also was of this opinion. That very solitude which he forbids to the melancholy and morbid and witless, he not only in the same letter permits to Lucilius, he even recommends and enjoins it. "Yes," he says, "I do not change my opinion. Avoid the many, avoid the few, avoid even the individual. I know of no one with whom I should be willing to have you shared. And see what an opinion of you I have; for I dare to trust you with your own self."[13] An austere precept, if I mistake not, and a rigid one. "Avoid the many," he says: I assent to it willingly. "Avoid the few:" I can bear it without distress. "Avoid even the individual:" you can drive me no further, you have hemmed me in within the narrowest confines of solitude. What now remains except that I should avoid myself? Yes, but then I should still be avoiding the individual. "There is no one with whom I should be willing to have you shared." Strange! But there is at least one with whom I would have you, my father, share yourself; perhaps there are several, but one there surely is. If I were to give such counsel to a friend, the enemies of solitude and virtue would exclaim on all sides and call me stony and inhuman, but here is a great man like Seneca enjoining his very dearest friend to avoid even the individual, and he speaks to a man who has attained moral perfection. The last statement, however, I should with your good leave contradict no matter who made it. Seneca himself, if sworn in as a witness, will admit that Lucilius was one of those who were making progress in virtue rather than one who had fully attained it. For though he often praises him, as is the manner of those who love, yet he would not exhort him so continually nor rebuke him on occasion if he thought he was perfect. If it

[13] *Epistles*, 10.

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is only affirmed that his advice is for one devoted at least to the study and practice of virtue, I agree. But let me return to my purpose, for I speak only to those who eagerly pursue learning and virtue. For the rest I have no wholesome counsel, unless it be that first of all they change their manner of life; after that we shall see about the proper environment for them.

Chapter 4. Men to whom solitude is advantageous should not be persuaded to despise the laws of friendship; they should fly from crowds and not from friends

BESIDES, I never persuaded those for whom I said solitude was advantageous that in their desire for solitude they should despise the laws of friendship. I bade them fly from crowds and not from friends. And if any one thinks that he possesses crowds of friends, let him first see to it that he is not deluded. Some sudden need or change of fortune is well calculated to reveal the truth, and while this is not to be wished out of a mere craving for experience, yet if it so befalls it contributes much to our enlightenment and the dissipation of our illusions. Moreover, if in his friendships as in other things one man should be richer than another, I should not be disturbed, nor should I admonish the solitary man so much to shun his friends as to wish that they should come to visit him singly and not in throngs, bringing comfort and encouragement to his leisure rather than annoyance. Let his leisure be modest and gentle, not rude; let his solitude be tranquil, not savage; in short, let it be solitude and not barbarism. Whoever invades him in this retreat should have occasion to marvel that humanity, which is exiled from the cities, inhabits the wilderness and that while he has found bears and lions in populous places, in solitude he has discovered angelic man.

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Such is my feeling in the matter, and this I hold to be the middle of the road between the two extremes. The man at one extreme is not happy unless he is in a crowd: he is deserving of pity rather than correction. The other says, "Avoid even the individual:" to him I know not what reply to make. I confess, Seneca, you have me there and weigh me down with your authority. And perhaps I should be inclined to submit if it were not for the opposition of one who is not inferior to you—I think you will not be angry if I say greater than you. Cicero, discussing the conditions of friendship, treats not alone of those for whom friendship is the most agreeable thing in life after virtue. Even persons of a fierce and brutal nature, he says, and those who shun the company and assemblies of men, of whom he discovers hardly one example in the whole world, cannot endure existence if they do not find—he does not say a friend, for their character is in the way,—but some one upon whom they may discharge the venom of their bitterness. Taking this observation as his point of departure he cites the saying of Architas of Tarentum that no one can be happy on earth, no matter how great his prosperity, nor even in heaven with the view of the stars spread out before him and the knowledge of the universe, unless he has some one with whom he may share these blessings. So averse is nature from complete solitariness![14]

In a still more famous passage he says, "If all that is essential to our wants and comforts were supplied by some magic wand as in the stories, then every man of first-rate ability could drop all other responsibility and devote himself exclusively to learning and study." Then, to show that it was ironically spoken, he says openly, "Not at all, for he would seek to escape from his loneliness."[15] See how in a few words he seems to condemn all that we have said of solitude; and he would have done so effectively if he had not gone farther. It is not our concern so much to explain the saying of Cicero as to

[14] *De Amicitia*, Ch. 23.
[15] *De Officiis*, i, Ch. 44 (Walter Miller's translation)

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reject from the examination this evidence of an orator's prejudice as suspicious, although it occurs in his philosophical writings. For if you note what he adds, it will appear quite clearly that he is speaking only of the extreme and inhuman kind of solitude (and if one seeks escape from this he is surely not escaping from the society of a chosen friend) and not passing judgment on my view but on another, and that in escaping from solitude he does not mean to rush into a crowd but only fears that in the pursuit of solitude humanity should be cheated of its rights. For when he says "He would seek escape from loneliness," he does not say from associates too, but he does say that he would seek a companion in his studies and would wish to teach and listen and learn. Since solitude, though it is furnished with such great advantages, without some one to share it seems unendurable even to savage minds and such as hate human intercourse, what must it seem to the gentle and refined? And if the conversation of a single companion is supposed to afford such great comfort to persons incapable of friendship, what must be the pleasure for its true votaries in converse with a faithful friend in whom they see their own image reflected, from whose lips they hear truth spoken, in whose presence, according to Cicero, "they dare to talk of all things as though they were talking with themselves,"[16] of whom they harbor no suspicion, in whose heart there is no deception, for whose sake every toil is sweet, without whose company no repose is soothing, from whom comes our defense against adversity and the crowning joy of our prosperity! I should be austere indeed if I thought that a friend like this was to be excluded from our solitude. It will never be my view that solitude is disturbed by the presence of a friend, but that it is enriched. If I had the choice of doing without one or the other, I should prefer to be deprived of solitude rather than of my friend. And so in embracing solitude I do not

[16] *De Amicitia*, Ch. 6.

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reject friendship, and I do not fly from any individual unless haply he be of the sort whose character I should shun in cities also, if I gave heed to the dictates of a serene life. The whole matter then comes to this, that I would share my solitude like everything else with my friends, believing that Seneca spoke with true humanity when he said that "no good thing is pleasant to possess without friends to share it,"[17] and being assured that solitude is a great and sweet possession.

But I should hold at arm's length from it not merely the wicked, but the idle and ignorant as well. Abominable is the retirement of Tiberius by which he stained with everlasting disgrace the innocent isle of Capri where, savage and wicked old man that he was, he established a brothel for his cruelty and licentiousness. Ridiculous is the solitude of Servilius Vatia who grew old in obscurity not far from that island on the Neapolitan shore near Cumæ in Campania famous for his wasted opportunity, buried rather than living within the walls of his country house. I suppose there are a great many people like Servilius everywhere, but he occurs first to the mind because a noble writer[18] has made him known by his mockery and delivered him over to us that we may be free from the necessity of inflicting upon our contemporaries the injury of a truthful exposure and the annoyance of serving as an awful example.

You now understand to whom I apply all that has been said or is to be said on the subject of solitude. It is not given to all men to excel by holiness of life or by literary achievement, or by noble use of leisure to earn the love and acknowledgment of posterity, hence it is neither present glory nor hope of future fame, (for which many have willingly poured out their lives), that spurs on the others, and for that very reason they are held illustrious. How much does it mean to you—if I may return at last to the subject—that this minute portion of time be-

[17] *Epistles*, 6.
[18] Seneca, *Epistle*, 55.

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longs to you, which, as soon as it has run by, there remains no hope of ever recalling or replacing? Besides, no man, though he be but moderately learned, is prevented from acquiring by reading and meditation a mind that lives on calm thoughts and is liberated from the chains of circumstance, submissive to God and reason but free in every other way, and a body also released from its heavy yoke, serving the mind alone. And if sometimes he should rebel in his insolence, he will before long return to his allegiance, and being saved from a thousand toils, a thousand dangers, a thousand tricks of fortune, he will be able to go about at will, to sit, to stand, to speak, to be silent, to think, and not be subject to disturbance from those busy, agitated fellows who are not content with their own unhappiness unless they can add the unhappiness of others to the general sum.

Chapter 5. Of the singular joy of the solitary in their freedom from earthly cares

WHAT shall I say of the pleasure of the past which comes as though at our back? There is that well known expression of Virgil,

> Belike
> This too with joy will be remembered yet.[19]

and the less familiar one of the same poet,

> Glad to have 'scaped so many Argive towns
> And through the midst of foes our flight pursued.[20]

These two expressions differ in the language but they are both spoken by Æneas with a single idea in view. You observe that while he is still in the midst of his trials he

[19] *Æneid*, i, 203 (James Rhoades's translation.)
[20] *Ibid.*, iii, 282-283.

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uses a verb in the future tense, but when he has once passed through them, he uses the present; whereas he first said *iuvabit meminisse*, he afterward writes *iuvat evasisse*. For it is sometimes sweet to recall what was in experience bitter, and dangers when they have receded into the distance have a power to soften the mind. For prosperity too has its dangers, which are neither fewer nor less serious and certainly more treacherous than those of adversity. The anxious father in Virgil says:

> What fears
> Had I lest Libya's realm should prove thy bane.[21]

How great therefore is the joy and the sense of safety in the solitude of one who has passed through everything that was to be dreaded and counts all evils behind him. How pleasant it is to feel that one has escaped calamity unhurt and has held to the right turn at the cross-roads when death lay in wait at the left, especially as the balance was inclined on the other side. For it is a natural effect that where the danger recollected was greater and more imminent, the joy at having escaped from it is the greater. The truth of this can be judged with particular force after a critical illness, a terrible shipwreck, a harsh imprisonment, or dreadful wars; and that is why you may often hear those who have been restored to health or have gained the harbor or escaped unexpectedly from their chains or returned victors from the battle recounting joyfully the stories of their dangers. But how sweetly the mind returns to worldly blandishments that have been rejected, to earthly honors despised, to riches well distributed, to pleasures scorned, to menaces evaded, to misfortune high-mindedly overcome, or to whatever had power to betray and did not betray. And the pleasure in these reflections is all the greater when you have so fairly escaped that there remains no fear of danger to come.

[21] *Æneid*, vi, 694.

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THE SIXTH TRACTATE

Of the ignorance, the errors, and the stupidity of dwellers in the city, and of the preservation from them of the solitary and of their freedom

Chapter 1. Of the boredom and dullness suffered by busy men and those who dwell in cities

I MAY seem to be referring to very trifling things,—yet is it a small matter to escape that daily boredom from which the dweller in the cities is hardly ever free and which is the result not only of what man does to man but what the sick mind at strife with itself inflicts upon itself? Everywhere in the squares of cities crowds of fools may be encountered in whose mouths no words occur more often than the familiar ones of the grammarian's formula, *piget, tædet, pœnitet*—I am troubled, I am weary, I am sorry— or the phrase from Terence, "I don't know what to do."[1] I believe them in every particular, especially the last, for if they knew what to do, all their complaints would be immediately hushed. Of what is it that you are weary, I ask you, if not of your very ignorance and folly? It is Seneca's saying that "folly is ever troubled with weariness of itself."[2] They do not find life agreeable, and not without ground, for they have no fixed purpose, no firmness, no unshakable determination. Seneca adds in the same connection, "Only the wise man is pleased with his own."[3] They do not know what to do, and not

[1] *Eunuchus*, i, 1, 28.
[2] *Epistles*, 9.
[3] *Ibid.*

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knowing that they do not know, they make no effort to know. The result is that they do not know to what end they are alive. How then should they love life when they do not know what it is good for? They generally live as if they thought they were born for no other purpose than to serve their gullet or belly, unhappy servants indeed to be subjected to such base masters. Lest there be any doubt that I have described their condition correctly, I will mention what is a frequent subject of discussion among them. If nature by some kind indulgence granted life to man without dependence on sleep or carnal desire, or food, or drink, and if without any of these things a man enjoyed rest and offspring and a temperate and steady satisfaction of his desires, would such a life, they ask, be more desirable than this of ours which is constantly exposed and enslaved to so many wants? And whenever by some chance I have been present at their disputations, a silent listener to the end, I seldom have heard one among them who did not audaciously maintain that our present state of misery was to be preferred to the other state of blessedness. Exulting in their own madness, they are in the habit of saying, "If you take away sleep and carnal pleasure and food and drink, what are we going to do? And what will life be when it is stripped of life's gifts and employments?" So completely do they expose their natures and acknowledge without the least sense of shame that they live only for those things which we have in common with brute beasts, as if that lost time, in which we share this brief space of life with sleep and pleasure, could not be spent in better thoughts, in the contemplation of God, or the study of nature, or the practice of virtue. To rouse your indignation still more strongly and to dispel every hope of their wholesome reformation, I call God and my memory to witness that I have heard these things more often from the lips of old men than of young.

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Chapter 2. Of the error of some busy old men and dwellers in cities

SUCH is the gravity and ripeness of our old men that they think it a misfortune to be torn from their lusts, though death stands before them ready to snatch their miserable souls from the decaying and ruinous habitation of its members. The name of pleasure beloved by youth is still so dear to them in old age that even when pleasure is exhausted they neglect to regard the outcome of pleasure, and they do not care to reach the object of their desire except by a foul and muddy path,—unhappy and mistaken wayfarers who hate the destination and love the road even when they are approaching their journey's end. If any of them should appear later to make confession of these things, you will hear him wavering and arguing in such a way as to make it quite clear that he is withdrawn from the false path only by a sense of shame and is not embracing the truth in response to his reason. Writing of these men in his book *Of the True Religion*, Augustine says, "Those to whom the health of their body is of small account would rather feed than be free from hunger, and rather indulge their passion than not feel its excitement; there are even found those who prefer sleeping to not sleeping. And yet the object of all these pleasures is to secure freedom from hunger and thirst and fleshly desire and bodily fatigue."[4] A little later he adds, "Those who wish to be thirsty and hungry, and to burn with passion, and to feel exhaustion in order that they may eat and drink and copulate and sleep with greater satisfaction (he does not say of such men that they are in love with wretchedness and sorrow, for no one is so indifferent to his welfare as to like the names of wretchedness and sorrow, but he does say of them that they) are in love with poverty which is the beginning of the greatest sorrows."[5] For it is clear that as the effects

[4] *De Vera Religione*, Ch. 53.
[5] *Ibid.*, Ch. 54.

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are generally inherent in the causes, so the love of the effects is implied in the love of the causes, and therefore he concludes terribly, "What they love shall be fulfilled in them, so that their portion shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."[6] You see how he deduces the effect from the cause: because they loved poverty they shall gain sorrow. He says many things besides in his divine style on this subject, but the point is obvious by acknowledgment of the general voice. And so, as he says, we are able to declare that many may be found who prefer this form of life, and some few who would like another kind but who, when they try to lift up their eyes a little higher, are unable to do so because they are blinded by the general dust and smoke, and when they would offer their ear to those who summon them to better things the din and tumult of popular errors hinders their purpose. And so the greater number, whether of their voluntary accord or constrained by bestial habit, with abject bearing cringing to their body but careless of their soul, without the charm of virtue, without any knowledge of it, drag along their spirit in ignominy and distress, and though their better nature at times pricks them and reminds them of its claims, yet the obstacles which I have mentioned remain in the way. Hence the hatred of life, hence the beginning of weariness, hence that restlessness of mind than which man can suffer nothing worse while he is alive. What wonder is it then if they waver in their actions and designs, if they find no pleasure in whatever they undertake? For they cannot gain what they desire if they desire nothing with conviction. To have a single aim sure and steadfast is the mark of a wise man; inconstancy of purpose is the most certain proof of folly. I shall never tire of citing Seneca to you. To one who asked him what port he should seek, he replied that no wind would favor him.[7] Such men keep constantly going and returning, and they do both with loathing. You have seen sometimes how they hastily remove from a place, how they

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Epistles*, 71.

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issue forth in flocks, how they suddenly scatter. When one wants to go here, another wants to go there. How indeed shall so many agree with one another when each one is so much in conflict with himself? I like to linger on this point. The man whom you have seen a moment ago you no longer recognize, and in a little while you will have to be told who the person is whom at this moment you know well. Now they are happy, now sad; now downcast, now elated; now oppressed with care and inert, now aflutter with childlike frivolity. The play of evenly matched instincts, the thoughtless gathering of wrath and its appeasement, the hourly mutation of feeling which Horace attributes to children[8] is in reality the peculiar quality of old men. Their instability is the more pernicious insofar as it is under less compulsion, rejects advisers, shields itself with authority, and works mischief by its example. For though a man's nature may have enough vices of its own, most evils arise from a spirit of emulation and a hankering to imitate. And what imitator has ever been content with limiting himself to the error of his guide? We are anxious to excel and be conspicuous and to leave in our rear those whom at the start we followed. I admit that Quintilian advised students of eloquence that they should enter into equal competition with their models rather than follow tamely in their wake, on the ground that by this attitude even if we do not succeed in getting ahead of a rival we may at least be able to come abreast of him. For no one who thinks he has to follow in another's footsteps can ever catch up with him, since he who follows must needs always remain behind. Besides, he says, it is generally easier to do more than to do precisely the same.[9] He advances further proofs in this argument which, while they are very admirable in their place, it would be a waste of time to reproduce here. Anyway, what is advantageously taught in the art of oratory, the art, that is, of speaking with propriety and elegance, has in our time been mischievously applied to

[8] *Epistles*, ii, 1, 99-100.
[9] *Institutes*, Bk. x, Ch. 2, 9-10.

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the art of wicked and disgraceful living. We have carried out the instructions of Quintilian, we have emulated, we have rivalled, we have excelled. From followers we have become leaders; doubtless we shall be overtaken by those who come after us. The same idea may be put in different ways: whether proposed to us for an example or object of emulation, we have in either case obeyed you, Quintilian, but in a different sense than you intended. You recommend clearness of language for our imitation, but we imitate dismal actions, and our fervent efforts are all applied to this single study. Would that all imitators of good, if there are such, rivaled their leaders in as short a time as the imitators of evil overtake theirs. As far as we are concerned, the advice given for excellence in oratory has been applied by us with the worst kind of addition to the vices of conduct, and the examples of errors left to us by our fathers we are with great zeal transmitting to posterity; and then we wonder at the accumulated heap of madness, to which something is added by each generation and from which nothing is ever withdrawn. I rather wonder that anything is yet lacking to complete the sum of insanity when so many minds are concentrated on a single object with such earnest emulation of their masters. And though the imitation of actions and of life is more dangerous where important matters are concerned, yet the madness shows itself flagrantly even in small things.

Chapter 3. Of the luxurious imitation of the vulgar and the changing fashions of those who live in cities

WHENCE now come those strange and absurd fashions of costume and carriage changing from one day to the next? A garment which one day reaches to the ground and the next exposes more than is decent, sleeves which now sweep the earth and

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now are too tight at the elbow, a belt which oppresses the breasts or flows loosely beneath the body? Whence the variety in musical melodies which, according to Plato, was fraught with so much danger to the state? Whence, finally, comes the frequent transformation in literary style and even in everyday speech? It is nothing more or less than imitation, reckless and persistent, and not content with any limits that may be imposed on it, that has brought in these distasteful and disagreeable caprices, and having brought them in continues to nourish and foster them. How indeed can men be expected to maintain a consistent course of life when they do not submit to be ruled by virtue, or reason, or the advice of their friends, but allow themselves to be whirled about by the madness of strangers and the wild caprices of fools? In short, those who so put off their own nature and discard the manners of their fathers and worship only what is foreign and far-fetched must needs be changing every time that something arrests their wandering gaze. There is no limit to their changes because there is no principle in imitation. They like everything that is foreign and dislike everything that is native. They would rather be anything but what they are. In this feeling they would be justified if it arose from a serious consideration of their condition instead of mere volatility. There is a certain Aruntius in Seneca who is laughed at as an imitator of Sallust.[10] But among us every town has its Aruntius, nay, many Aruntii, who ape not only the language of other men but their behavior as well. No one is of a clear mind as to his costume, his speech, his thought —in short, as to what sort of man he would like to be, and therefore every man is unlike himself. Youth, walking with too great docility in the footsteps of abandoned old men, has with great spirit arrived at the very apex of folly; the second generation easily surpasses the first, the third the second, and so on indefinitely. It is difficult for the mind to conceive how great will be the madness,

[10] *Epistles*, 114.

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thus augmented in transmission, when it reaches our descendants, although it may be that it has reached its limit and fulfilment in us, as many ages ago it was said,

Vice is at stand and at the highest flow,[11]

so that it was impossible to carry things further without ruin.

Perhaps some will think that I have harped on this point with more insistence than was need. But if they knew the first and greatest of my griefs, springing from my pity for human kind and especially for Italy, from which once the patterns of the virtues were diffused and which now, alas, I behold corrupted by the imitation of outlandish practices, and overflowing with extravagances where once it teemed with the spoils of conquered peoples, perhaps they would only wonder that my sorrow was compressed in so brief an outcry. For I know not who would endure it in silence. Whence arises this unworthy and disgraceful aversion for our own manners, whence is born the more disgraceful admiration and the more unworthy reverence for foreign practices? This was not the way of our forefathers, whose descendants I wish we deserved to be called. They could and did take satisfaction in what was their own. They did not explore the valley of the Rhine or the branches of the Danube to get possession of silly toys with which to degrade Roman decency to foul barbarism, but they marched abroad with the ambition of expanding their empire and gaining glory, with armed hosts and flying banners, meaning to bring back not some ugly substitute for their native costume but triumphs and renowned names. And yet they were not so much infatuated with their own as to despise indiscriminately all that was foreign. They respected all things according to their true worth equally among enemies and friends, among strangers and neighbors. Wherever there was virtue, wherever there was distinction of manners, wherever there were arts of war and peace, wherever the accomplishments of language and intellect were more

[11]Juvenal, i, 1, 149 (Dryden's translation).

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elegant, or doctrine more highly developed, they eagerly conveyed it as a possession to their home, thinking none of their spoils more sumptuous. Nor was their judgment mistaken, for no riches are more secure than those that are treasured in the mind. But wherever there was anything disreputable, it was their concern to chastise or shun it. Our glorious posterity, however, thinks it has accomplished something notable if some young fellow or, what makes my gorge rise even more, some old fop puts on the vile mantle of some unknown visitor or the ridiculous garb of a hireling soldier, or returns home from some journey with a coat cut short above the breeches, as though he were disfigured for some notable jest and submitted to suffer of his own free choice what David inflicted as a severe punishment upon his servants. If the grandfather of this hare-brained mimic should come to life, he would stare in amazement and pity upon his grandson. I do not know why I look upon these things so mournfully, as though the dishonor or the glory affected me personally. Ever since I began to take note of them, I admit, my mind has been strangely worried and I have been waiting to see what would be the limit of these revolutions and where the thing would stop. I am living in this generation, yet I would rather have been born in any other, though no age was ever lacking in causes of complaint. And though time, which in such things is not, as Aristotle says, a good discoverer and collaborator[12] but a mischievous one, has already made stale the monstrosities, it has not yet been able by its slow processes to give definite shape to wholesome manners. For it is certain that our first ancestors, as we have all heard, dealt in virtue and glory, which are laid up for them in the everlasting memory of men, while we, as any one may see, traffic in undying infamy and empty bubbles. Of this I have complained often, I remember, both in speech and writing, but in vain. Still the wrath of God hovers over

[12] *Ethics*, Bk. i, Ch. 7.

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us and his just vengeance pursues us. Like an earthly master the Almighty takes vengeance when he is offended; the former visits punishment on his graceless servants, the latter upon the proud rulers of the earth. I long to cry out, "Whither do ye tend, unhappy mortals, where is your utter frenzy driving you? Pause in your career, stop, and look where you are rushing. You have forsaken the footsteps of your fathers and are walking in the ways of the enemy. You are overcome by the errors of those whom you have conquered in the field. Return to the customs of your fathers and abandon those of strangers, that you may live not only more honestly but more happily, and learn sometimes to have one wish for which you are not indebted to anybody's whim but to your own natural reason." This is what I should like to say and whatever else anger and grief might dictate in the present conditions, if I did not think that the minds of men had become insensible and matters were in a hopeless plight.

Chapter 4. The reasons for some of the errors and waste of time of dwellers in the city

WE WHO were wont to show the right road to others, now like blind men led by the blind—a token of impending ruin—are being rushed along dangerous ways, revolving in the orbit of strange examples, not knowing what we desire. For it is ignorance of our aim that produces all this evil, whether it is peculiar to ourselves or common to all people. The misguided know not what they do, therefore whatever they do turns to disgust as soon as they have begun it. For they do not do what demands doing but look for things to do and go hunting in the densest thickets occasions of perplexity

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and trouble. Hence discussions without end, hence strife in the middle of the street, beginnings rejected before they mature, and nothing fully accomplished. They look for devices with which to cheat the day, and, as though the sun did not hasten sufficiently to its setting, they assist its speed with their ingenuity. And how common is the expression of such people: "Let us chase away this day, let us do something to make the day pass." The day ought to be retarded and not urged on in its course. For them, however, the day is too long and the night still longer, and life itself distastefully long. Not only do they pray for summer in winter and for winter in summer, but in the morning they pray for the evening and in the night for the morning, although they will make little account of either when it comes. In them is literally fulfilled what is written in the Bible: "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day."[18] What Job uttered in his poverty and affliction, our rich men say in the midst of health and prosperity. They complain and are filled with troubles in anticipation. Constantly at strife with the nature of things, they scold the hours for their slowness and spur the dull minutes to headlong flight, though what is needed is not spurs but a curb—if only whirling time would submit to be curbed in any way. But these people, it seems, one moment desire death, the imminence of which they fear above all things, and again they ask for life while they are wishing that it may pass. With such eagerness do they urge on the flight of time as must surely be the cause of death to many of them who, always worrying over the future and bitterly hating the present, are provoked to summon death through weariness of living.

[18] *Job*, vii, 2-4.

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Chapter 5. How the pleasantness of the solitary life preserves one from these ills and impatiences

BUT you may ask, "Why all these words on this single point of our discussion?" In truth, the pleasantness of the solitary life preserves one from these evils and from this kind of irksomeness. It gladly makes use of present occasions and awaits the future calmly. It does not brood in suspense on the morrow and puts off nothing to the next day that can or should be done today. And this is reasonable. For what is more stupid than with projected longing and hope to crave what is another's or is subject to a thousand chances, and neglect the present which is the one thing safely in your possession? He who waits in suspense for the morrow will never cease from his suspense. For no day except the last will be without a morrow, and every day except the first has been the morrow of some other day. This is the evil of our life,—and it hardly has a greater affliction,—to be losing life in the hope of living, and like a dog in pursuit of a hare swifter than himself, ever to be catching at empty air with our jaws and not once seizing the game which we pursue. For as soon as ever the morrow comes it ceases to be the morrow, and behold either another morrow is in prospect, or the day has marched stealthily by, and though there be another day, yet it too is a morrow. That is the day we chase after, the day which is always near our grasp yet always ahead of us and baffling us with its proximity, and when we have got close to it, it unexpectedly slips from our hold. Snatched from our jaws over and over again and flying steadily before us, it incites us to a pursuit in which we are destined never to overtake. In the meantime none of those things are done which might be done today.

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But for the solitary man, who has regulated the entire course of his life and not merely some portions of it, there is no day or night that is too long, though it is often shorter than he would like when he is engaged in his innocent tasks and the light of day is gone before his labor is accomplished. He knows how to join on night to day and day to night, and when the occasion demands it to combine the two, and in other ways to interchange the duties incident to each division, acting on all occasions so that the allowance of time, to which he neither wishes to give the spurs nor is able to apply the curb, shall not flow wastefully away. To this he devotes all his deliberation, all his study, on this he concentrates with all the strength of his mind. In short, this is his greatest concern, to remove every evil thought, every annoyance, every feeling of disgust and live today in the present day, content to live tomorrow if a morrow shall be granted. But in the hope of tomorrow he does not neglect his business, knowing that it is in the habit of betraying many and of telling many falsehoods, but he has faith in today because it gives what the other only promises. Yet such is the blindness of men that they embrace the hope more eagerly than the actuality. He knows, moreover, what dress, what manner of speech, what habits are becoming to youth and to old age. To these he adapts his mind and makes no change except such as his change in years dictates. There is no one whom he desires to imitate and in following whom he loses his senses; he looks to nature and follows her as his guide and parent. From this it follows, as Cicero says, that, when all the other parts of life have been so well represented, it is not likely that the last act will be negligently treated, as though by some careless poet.[14] I know a man, I am not speaking as Paul,[15] but an actual man in the flesh who is confirmed in the solitary life, content with his rude subsistence and his studies

[14] *De Senectute*, Ch. 2.
[15] Cf. 2 *Cor.* xii, 2.

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and who, though he lack much of a blessed life, at least has this considerable compensation for his solitude, that his whole year passes happily and peacefully as though it were a single day, without annoying company, without irksomeness, without anxieties. Whereas those voluptuous men of the city, in the midst of their wines and feasts, their roses and ointments, their songs and their plays, saturated with liquor, enervated with sleep, exhausted with their activities, overcome with both their ennui and their pleasures, think a single day longer than a year and can scarcely pass a few hours without grumbling and annoyance.

Chapter 6. The solitary man should regulate his mind as good kings do their possessions

THUS in the little time at my disposal have I set down partly what I remember from my observation, partly what this observation permits me to infer. Of high themes I speak as a sinner hesitatingly, but of familiar matters more boldly, as one with experience such as is afforded by my present abode, my devotion to freedom, and my well known love of literature and solitude. Let me add but one reflection and make an end at last. The governors of provinces and the magistrates of cities when they enter the territory of their jurisdiction are wont to issue a proclamation to malefactors to abstain from crime. This custom was common throughout Italy in my youth; whether it still prevails I do not know, for it is some time since I have been there and usages gradually decay everywhere. All good practices have a brief life, only the evil ones are undying. We have observed everywhere upon the arrival of new governors the open

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flight from the cities of swindlers, thieves, and procurers, but if we cast our eyes back toward antiquity, the custom turns out to be of considerable age. A very timely use of it is said to have been made by the celebrated Scipio with the Numantian army which, after it had been demoralized by the quarrels of previous leaders and the licentiousness of the soldiery, he brought to order with severe discipline, and with a single warning from the herald's trumpet expelled from the camp the very day he reached it the cooks, and the procurers, and the great swarm of hucksters, and all the other elements which catered to that sort of dissipation, together with two thousand harlots who had attached themselves to an army in the habit of indulging itself and running away. This discipline is believed to have been largely responsible for the gaining of that glorious and till then unlooked for victory. Other famous leaders have imitated this course, but let it suffice to have named the most famous. To our lot, who have undertaken to rule and to bring into order neither cities, nor kingdoms, nor armies, but only the state of our breast, a very small province seems to have fallen. But when the sway of reason shall come to impose its restraint on the rebellious impulses of our spirit, then we shall begin to understand what a serious war it is and what a troublesome province, to exercise rule over our self. But what is to be done in this case? Indeed, if you ask me this question, I shall recommend what I have told you of the practice of governors and commanders. In respect of numbers I admit their problem may be greater, for they are entrusted with large populations and vast armies whereas we have but the care of a single soul. But as far as danger is concerned I deny that there is any difference. What is more dangerous than to die although you die alone, seeing that some people rather think it an abatement of their misfortune to die with many? We too have to expel vice from our borders, put our lusts to flight, restrain our illicit propensities, chastise our wantonness,

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and elevate our mind toward higher objects, and as Horace finely says,

> If we for sin repent,
> We must this root of greed accurst
> Pluck up; and young minds on indulgence bent
> We must in sterner studies guide.[16]

Let some govern the populous city and others rule the army. Our city is that of our mind, our army that of our thoughts: we are distraught with domestic and foreign wars. Do we think that there is any government more restless than the state of the human mind? Do we believe that our enemies there are weaker than those of Scipio in Numantia? He attacked a single city and a single people, we are engaged in a struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devils. See how your enemies appear before you, how united, how in earnest, how relentless! That great general came, it is said, to an army that was demoralized, he took the place of commanders who had been beaten and put to flight: but how is it with us? Have not we too come into a city sufficiently dispirited and demoralized and crammed with cases of cowardice, our own as well as that of others? What numbers of fallen have been reported to us, what numbers have we beheld prostrate at our feet! How many times have we ourselves fallen, to how many dangers of falling are we still exposed! Everything round about us is full of terrors—our soft and pliable affections, our numerous and unconquered enemies, dangers both great and small, no place for sleep or relaxation. If we desire safety and victory, let us adopt the example of the victorious commander, since we too are commanders of our own affairs and a similar danger calls for similar precaution. Why do I say similar? Both our peril is greater and our reward. He was called upon to correct only the vices of others while we are required to correct our own as well. He by preserving the situation of a terrestrial country, destined some time to perish, gained earthly glory for himself, but we seek the

[16] *Odes III*, 24, 50-54 (John Marshall's translation).

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salvation and everlasting life of an immortal soul. Therefore if we place great things before small and our own necessity before that of others, let us with the utmost diligence banish whatever hinders this object. And how, you ask, shall this be done? Will you banish your vices into exile, which neither laws nor kings have ever been able to do? Will you enter upon a path so far unattempted in order to untie inextricable knots, and will you wrest away luxury from the rich, their thefts from servants, complaints from the poor, envy from the base, arrogance from the noble, corruption from the court, pleasure from the town, discord from the mob, and avarice from almost everybody? I wish it were possible, but I have no such hope, and I admit that all the sulphur can be more easily drawn out from the entrails of Etna and all the mud from all the swamps, than these evils, these burning crimes, these filthy customs from the dregs of cities in which is to be found the worst market-place of such wares, among which the happy man lives unhappily, even though his mind has attained its full growth, and from which it is happier to be withdrawn. What then is the upshot? I return to my oft repeated advice, that we should run away from the plagues which we are unable to drive off. And for this purpose I know only of the haven and refuge of the solitary life about which I have discoursed so much that I am afraid I may have wearied you and that you may look upon solitude as more infected even than cities with the disease of talkativeness.

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FRANCIS PETRARCH

THE LIFE OF SOLITUDE

THE SECOND BOOK

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THE FIRST TRACTATE

Containing a single chapter, passing in compact enumeration over the most familiar examples of holy and famous men who by their presence have given distinction to solitude

I FEEL that something is yet wanting and I now perceive that what you are looking for is to have the argument, strong though it is in itself, reinforced with examples. The philosophers and poets who in order to rise to greater heights first betook themselves to solitude would make a long story. As for the holy men who, condemning cities by their voluntary withdrawal, made solitude splendid with their saintly presence, their tale is even longer and more widely known. If I were inclined to write of these with any fullness I could not help discussing what is too familiar, for what is there in regard to them that you are not aware of? Therefore do not expect that I shall transcribe for you what are called the *Lives of the Fathers*. This is a title which I believe our writers have borrowed from Marcus Varro whose book, however, was composed from a different point of view, being concerned not so much with arousing minds to devotion as with the investigation of facts.

I shall not speak of the cave in which Dorotheus lay concealed for sixty years, nor of how Father Ammon, leaving the wife with whom he had long lived in virginal continence, spent the remainder of his existence alone in the desert of Mt. Nitria and at last gave up to God his blessed soul which was then seen by Anthony, who lived thirteen days journey from the place, ascending to heaven accompanied by rejoicing angels. I shall not report the manner of life of Pambo on the same mountain, who by some

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writers is with careful parallels put into comparison with St. Anthony and even placed above him, nor shall I relate that of Anthony, one of his many disciples, who became so famous for his study and knowledge of sacred literature that it was sought to make him a bishop by force. Seeing himself fairly caught and finding no other way of escape, in order not to be deprived of his solitude he cut off his ears, hoping that this would disqualify him for the priesthood, and when this stratagem did not succeed he threatened those who were pressing him that if they persisted he would cut off the tongue for the sake of which he was subjected to their importunity. I shall not speak of the two Macarii who lived in happy solitude, one to the age of 90, the other of 100, accomplishing amazing works. I shall not allude to the manner in which Moses, a certain Ethiopian, was converted from a thief into a solitary priest serving Christ, nor to the manner in which Arsenius developed from a proud senator into a great lover of Christ and despiser of himself. It was to him that a voice from heaven called, "Avoid men and you shall be saved," and again, "Arsenius, make your escape, practice silence, and be at peace." I shall not tell how Paul the Simple (he got the name from his habit of life), when he sought solitude as a refuge from life with his adulterous spouse, arrived at such great familiarity and grace with Christ that by virtue of his most pure and efficacious prayer he was able to banish from his troubled heart that chief of the unclean spirits whom Anthony confessed he was unable to drive away.

I shall not explain the temptations of body and mind which were conquered by the ancient recluses Pachomius and Stephen, nor examine the argument by which Paphnutius brought three friends of God from the cities to the desert as to a place of greater safety and proximity to God, nor how Elpidius drew throngs of monks to the solitary life through admiration of his virtue, nor how Serapion by his charity became a servant twice in order to free his masters from their servitude to sin. I shall not relate the piety of the Deacon Ephraem, the firmness of Pior, the

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sweatings of Adolius, the merciful severity of Innocent, the industry and toil of Evagrius. I shall not investigate in what solitude Malchus pastured his cruel master's flock, nor in what cavern he lurked with his nominal wife when the lioness fought in their trembling behalf and they escaped from the fury of his pursuing master. I shall not set forth the resplendent virtue of John the Egyptian nor his foreknowledge of future events. From him the Emperor Theodosius, though situated at a great distance, sought an opinion when he was in doubt, and being armed with the advice of the poor recluse, he carried on his pious but terrible and amazing wars. From him too another Roman general of lesser note sought counsel when he had become alarmed by the invasion of a great horde of Ethiopians and by the unlucky conjunctures in a battle he had fought against them. In that situation he approached the man of God and sought his advice, not through an emissary but in his own person, and being encouraged by him with the hope of certain victory, even the day of the battle being predicted, and with the assurance that he should return with all of the enemy's booty, including what had previously been taken from him, and earn the thanks of the Emperor, he went forth boldly, fought the battle, scattered the enemy, carried off the spoils, and received his meed of thanks. If any worth is to be attached to what a man so holy and so wise in knowledge of the future has to say from experience about the matter that now concerns us, observe what is his opinion concerning solitude. And lest any one think that I have changed anything to suit my argument, I report his very words as they were related by those who had them directly from his lips: "An isolated dwelling-place," he said, "and a solitary habitation is very beneficial." On another occasion he said, "For avoiding dangers or transgressions and for gaining the grace of God and capturing the immediate knowledge of the divine essence, the most advantageous thing is a remote dwelling-place and a habitation in the midst of a desert." And that you may see how he gave force by his acts to what he preached in

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words, you have the evidence of St. Jerome himself, who wrote what I here insert; "I saw John in the part of the desert of the Thebaid which lies close to the city of Ligum living on the rock of a steep mountain. To go up to him was difficult, the approach to the monastery was blockaded and closed, so that from the time he was forty till he was ninety, which was his age when I saw him, no one had entered his monastery, but he had shown himself to visitors through a window."

I shall not describe the dwelling place of the monk Elias, which was almost more amazing than any: how frightful the wilderness, how vast the isolation to which no words can do justice, how rugged the cave, how rough and narrow the path, hurting the feet that groped over it and baffling the eyes that strove to find their way; how in that place, with a tremulous frame but a firm spirit, the old man passed seventy years of the hundred and ten which constituted his life. You will form an idea for yourself of how great a master of the life of solitude must have been a man who persisted for so long and uninterrupted a stretch in its pursuit, when in our day persons consider it a great privation to leave, though only for three days, their ambitions and avarice, not to speak of the city's resorts for eating, drinking, and prostitution. I shall not intrude here that Eutychianus who lived in the neighborhood of Olympus in Bithynia and who is known to fame for his friendship with both his heavenly and earthly princes, nor the gentle and modest Theon, a man who took no oath and knew no falsehood, remarkable by his continuous silence for thirty years and by his great learning in nearly every branch of literature. I shall not introduce Apollo, the inhabitant of the Thebaid who for forty years was buried in the innermost depths of solitude, yet could not so conceal himself but that he was in the end brought to light by the splendor of his miracles; nor Benjamin, the old man who gained renown from his dropsy, and who while performing remarkable cures on the patients brought to him showed no concern about his own disease, far-developed though it was, but comforted

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the others and besought them to pray for his soul instead of his body, making this noteworthy remark: "This body of mine, even when it was sound, was of no profit to me."

I shall not dwell on Epiphanius, first famous as a hermit, whom solitude later gave to Cyprus for her bishop; nor on Aphrates, a poor and ragged old man, whom piety and a zeal for the faith carried from his cave into the midst of cities to confront an impious emperor with stinging and penetrating reproach; nor on Isaac, the monk, checking the impiety of the latter with the threat of the divine judgment; nor on Macedonius living on a wooded summit, a man of unbounded simplicity and steadfastness, and coming down from his mountain top to restrain a fit of wrath in a pious but hot-tempered prince. I shall give no account of Acepsena, who hid himself for sixty years in a cell, always silent, seen by no one, nor of the well-known Ceumatius and Didymus, both of them blind, but fulfilling every pious duty as if they had their sight. One of them indeed gained literary distinction on top of all. I shall also pass over countless others for whose very names books will not suffice.

Finally, that you may know I have omitted the most striking examples as being of too common knowledge, I shall not expatiate on how St. Anthony, the greatest of all the monks of the East, penetrated into a wilderness previously inhospitable and known practically only to wild beasts; how, worn out with impatience at the throngs of the sick who gathered with the growth of his reputation to be cured by him, and fearing lest his celebrity should become a matter of vainglory to himself and an occasion of false beliefs concerning his power, he put on a few garments as for a journey, and while he sat on the bank of the river meditating flight, a voice came to him from heaven. And do you suppose the voice said, "Abandon solitude, live in the city; this is a place of trouble, that a place of joy and repose; seek out Alexandria, return to your country?" Or did it not rather say, "If you would be at peace, Anthony, go now still farther into the wilderness?" Promptly obeying these words he went on, having

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a guide from heaven to show him the way. I might go on to tell how while he stayed in the desert, always in armor and on guard, he overcame all the assaults of the devils; how the boastful title of philosophy and the wisdom of the world was overthrown and trodden underfoot with the force of clear reason by a humble, uneducated old man; how Roman Emperors, attracted by the miracle of his fame, addressed letters to him with the reverence due to a father and were immensely delighted when they were accorded the honor of a reply; how when he reached his ninetieth year, victorious in so many spiritual battles, with so many hosts of invisible enemies over-powered, and thought that he was the only one who lived in that desert, no human being having anywhere shown himself, it was manifested to him by a revelation at night that he should seek out Paul the Theban, who had been living much longer in an even remoter region of the solitude, how he looked for him and found him, not without encountering dreadful monsters on the way; how at last when they met and broke their long silence in the retirement of a cave near the bank of a little spring beneath the shade of an aged palm, a single loaf sent down from the sky sufficed amply to still the hunger of these two valiant veterans in the service of Christ, worn out as they were with much fasting; how a few days later with grief at his heart and shedding many tears, the guest buried Paul, being assisted by the claws of lions while digging the earth in this unaccustomed task of piety; in the end how, still concealed in the desert and so far shrinking from fame that he wished even the place of his burial to be a secret, and that no breath of worldly reputation should come to disturb even his cold ashes, he nevertheless obtained great renown and glory. It is the declaration of Athanasius, his heir and biographer, that Christ, as he had promised in the beginning, made conspicuous to Africa, Spain, France, Italy, Illyricum, and to Rome herself, the queen of cities, his humble servant who was buried in the depths of the Egyptian wilderness and hidden as it were in another world.

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I shall not proceed to recount how Hilarion, the well known rival in virtue of St. Anthony, also fled into the solitude, having first been aroused by the man's fame and then, when he had observed his life for two months, been stirred by his precepts and the force of his living example; how abiding there continually from youth to old age, he resisted the severities of winter and summer, first in a narrow hut and later in a cell scarcely narrower and having more the appearance of a tomb than of a dwelling-place; how when he thought of running away from the crowds which were gathered by his fame and from a solitude which had grown restless with the cares of a multitude, and his purpose became known, ten thousand men and more obstructed his way. When by abstaining from food in his distress at this he had almost wasted away and the people at last suffered him to go, though sorrowfully trooping after him, he departed into the profoundest solitudes. And so he came to the habitation of Anthony, which had recently been deprived of the presence of that great spirit, and finding his disciples there, he made eager inquiry about all those matters which to hear were piteous, though pious to relate, and looked upon the little garden and the cot from which the blissful soul had ascended to heaven, and he lay down on the cot in sweet remembrance of that worthy man and often embraced it and kissed it, as though it were still warm from the recent pressure of Anthony, and—this touch I add not from my reading but in reliance on my own feeling—he moistened with his own tears the bed of the stranger. From this place he went seeking one solitude after another, but his fame, envious of the peace he longed for, always outran him, and even when he had determined to make his way to barbarous nations among which neither knowledge nor understanding draw breath, the same renown still pursued him. First he sailed to Sicily, from there to Dalmatia, and finally to Cyprus, an island very uncongenial to his habits of life but on which he found a rock which suited his austere purpose. There, to use the expression of Jerome, who has celebrated him in writing, having taken posses-

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sion of this most terrible and secluded spot, he remained; and while everybody was watching lest he slip away by stealth, because it was generally believed that he could not remain long in one place, he there brought to an end the labor of his life, and followed Anthony to heaven as he had imitated him on earth.

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THE SECOND TRACTATE

Some less commonplace examples of the fathers of the old testament who cultivated solitude

Chapter 1. The transition from the foregoing examples to those less familiar

HAVING therefore passed over these cases with brief and succinct mention and placed them as it were in a subordinate rank, and having buried in silence the rest, numerous as are the persons to whom a lonely desert was a heaven on earth, and though the reading of their lives is full of pleasure and variety, piercing and burning, possessing a thread of precious material which, when woven by genius, delights equally by its substance and form, I shall now assemble a few examples not so trite scattered through the more hidden parts of the scriptures.

Chapter 2. The solitude of the parent of the human race, Adam

TO BEGIN with the first, there is Adam, that general parent of the human race, than whom, as long as he was alone, no man was happier, but as soon as he received a companion, none more wretched. Alone he stood up, with his companion he fell. Alone he was citizen of a happy land, with his companion he was a wanderer in unhappy exile. Alone he lived in peace and joy, with his companion in labor and much sorrow. Alone

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he had been immortal, as soon as he is joined with woman he becomes mortal. Behold herein a clear and conspicuous token of what posterity may hope from the companionship of women.

Chapter 3. Abraham's cult of solitude

BUT not to linger on the threshold, Abraham, the great father of many nations, speaking with God in tents pitched in the valleys (not in palaces and amid the luxury of cities), deserved to win those promises which are being carried out continuously in this latest generation of men,—would it were not the worst! And he was sitting not in a chamber filled with vessels and covered with variegated carpets, but on the grassy floor of nature, in the plains of Mamre, according to the text of *Genesis*,[1] and according to Josephus under an ilex, when he was deemed worthy to entertain God's angels; and, not to assume anything that is not expressly in the words, that rural feast was celebrated in the shade of an acorn-bearing oak, not beneath a roof of fretted gold. This most holy of men and most deserving of divine favor was likewise of such entire obedience that to listen to the command of God he would not spare his only begotten son. Let me pass over in silence the rest of his praises, for reciting which another time and a more fitting place will be afforded. Because of all these virtues, since divine favor so closely embraced him, it is not greatly to be wondered at that his Egyptian handmaiden, when she ran away, was for his merit brought back by an angel, and when a second time she was imperiled and in despair, was once more restored by an angel. Both these incidents, as is in keeping with the fitness of things, took place in the wilderness, one near a spring of water, the other under a tree, and so it is no wonder that the child whom she carried along in her flight, having been preserved in the wilderness, should be mindful of heaven's benefit and later himself become a votary of the wilderness.

[1] xviii, 1.

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Chapter 4. The solitude of Isaac

WHAT of Isaac, who was sprung from such a father? When his fruitful wife was being brought to him from a distant land, what do you suppose he was doing? Was he by chance in the market place, was he pleading cases or giving judgment, was he buying or selling, extending loans or asking for them, demanding settlement or making it? None of these things! What then? He was walking at that time, it is said, on the way leading to the well which is called the Living and Seeing One. Truly living and seeing, living in eternity and seeing all things, not Sol, as Ovid and Apuleius have declared, but God the omnipotent, creator of the sun and the stars and all things, in whom is the well, or as the Psalmist has it, the fountain of life, to which we travel and attain not by sleeping nor by treading in byways but by walking over the only true way. "For he dwelt in the south country. And he went forth to meditate in the field at the eventide."[2] In these words also there is nothing which I can regard as free from a hidden meaning. "For he dwelt in the south country," in a country that is lowly and toward the decline, and bright and fervent from its nearness to the ethereal sun. "And he went forth"—whence, do you think, but from the house of his own body? He went forth, I say, out of himself and the prison of mortal misery, not for the sake of ignoble idleness but to meditate. For what else, I beseech you, makes the life of man? In what other action does he differ from the brute beasts? Splendidly does Cicero say, "To a cultivated man living is thinking."[3] For this purpose Isaac chose neither the city nor the theatre but the field as a place especially suitable, and the decline of day as the most appropriate time. For no place is more favorable for the meditative man than a rustic solitude and no time of life than that period of tranquillized peace already verging toward the sunset of existence when the heat of youth has passed away and the hour of high noon, if I may use the phrase, has been left behind.

[2] *Gen.* xxiv, 62-3.
[3] *Tusculans*, Bk. v, Ch. 38.

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Chapter 5. The solitude of Jacob

WHAT of Jacob, the greatest of the patriarchs, the son of Isaac, and the grandson of the great Abraham, when he saw the ladder reaching to heaven and the angels ascending and descending and the Lord leaning over the ladder? Where shall we suppose that he was, in how large a city, in how fair a mansion, how rich a chamber? Not only was he far from cities, he was far even from a habitation, if I am not to change the very words of Josephus. He would not approach any of the inhabitants of the region because he hated them, but lay down under the open sky, supporting his head on stones which he placed beneath it. And when he was going back to his country with his two wives and many children, with his servants and handmaidens, and enriched with flocks of all kinds, he was again met by angels. But where, I pray you? In a city, when he was taking his ease? No, but on the road, just after his departure; and before he had ended his journey, there appeared to him that nocturnal wrestler from whom he received the new name which has remained illustrious to posterity; and he appeared to him not in a public amphitheatre or amid crowds of men, but at the crossing of a brook when Jacob had been left there alone.

Chapter 6. The solitude of Moses

WHERE was Moses, the man who was closest to God, when, holding talk with God, he obtained the law, when he procured the safety of his people, when, by himself, far from the field of battle, he gained that memorable victory with prayer for his sole weapon? Indeed he was not in any of the cities of Syria or of Egypt, but in forests and on the summit of a high mountain. He was in the wilderness when he forced the bitter waters to grow sweet by throwing into them a

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single stick, and when he performed all those wonders to read of which taxes our powers, let alone recounting them. It was not from a golden throne but from a frightful wilderness that he looked after that immense host which contained so many evil-doers and ingrates toward God and men, and in their greatest need procured for them a wonderful abundance of life's necessities, when the people, being hungry, gathered in their camp the quail actually dropped from heaven, and being thirsty, drank their fill of sweet water from the rock he had struck with his wand, when for forty years they enjoyed in the desert that divine and miraculous food which was subject neither to avarice nor parsimony and which was not to be obtained in cities or from the public caterer but was sent down from heaven. Do you see how favorable solitude is to divine benefits, to intercourse with God, and to meetings with angels? And so I am less surprised that when this man of exalted life was about to depart from among men, a solitude was assigned for his glorious death, as it had previously been done with his brother, and God's words to him were not, "Get thee to this or the other city," but "Get thee up into the mountain and die."[4] These words, if I mistake not, ought to receive particular attention from us in every deliberation of life and death.

Chapter 7. The solitude of Elijah

WHY should I unfold the details? Every part is full of examples. Where was Elijah when he dazzled with his portents of superior brightness; when, hiding in the wilderness, he was fed by the thoughtful ravens at the command of God while the people were perishing of hunger in the cities; when, lying prostrate on the ground, from the top of Mount Carmel he relieved with an unlooked for rain the three years' drouth which had been afflicting the land and the population; when on the same Mount Carmel by the test of the sacrifice, with God as judge, he overcame the 850 false prophets and

[4] *Deut.* xxxii, 48.

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with the approval of the people slew them by the brook Kishon? Withdrawing on this account from the threatening fury of the queen, he sought the concealment of the desert, and when he had fallen asleep under the shade of a juniper tree, he was roused by an angel and admonished to eat food of mean appearance but of such good virtue that in the strength of it he performed fasting a journey of forty days and as many nights. After this, while dwelling in a cave he is visited by the voice of God and sent to anoint kings and prophets; sitting on the top of a mountain, with unimaginable confidence he orders the fire to descend from heaven on the royal troops of fifty and is promptly obeyed; with the touch of his mantle he divides the waters of the Jordan and crosses over dry-shod, the elements themselves paying reverence to the saintly recluse. Where was Elijah when he did these things? In the wilderness, no doubt, from which he was finally snatched up to heaven in a chariot of flame. Where was Elisha when he obtained a double portion of the spirit of his translated master; when he restored to his grieving friend the iron hatchet, causing it to float in contradiction of the law of its nature; when he came to the assistance of the three kings and their armies and filled their river-beds without the aid of any rain, that they might not perish of thirst? The first two incidents took place on the banks of the Jordan, the third in the wilderness of Edom. It is superfluous to ask where he was when he divided the waters with the mantle of his master and by himself crossed over the dry hollow of the Jordan as he had previously crossed it in the company of Elijah. Where in short were so many prophets when they were illuminated with visions faithfully forecasting events to come? To treat of these singly is for the present too long a proceeding. And not only the prophets, but the sons of the prophets also, those monks, as Jerome calls them, of whom we read in the Old Testament, built themselves huts near the streams of the Jordan and deserting crowds and cities sustained their life on barley and wild herbs.

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Chapter 8. The solitude of Jeremiah

BUT Jeremiah, too, ought not to be passed over in silence, since he offers so clear a testimony in favor of this kind of life when he says, "It is good quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." And as if to make it clear that this can be done only in solitude, he adds, "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him."[5] In these words I am aware of the blessed patience of one who waits hopefully, I am aware of the endurance of the Lord's yoke which is better than any freedom, I am aware of the peace of sitting still and of silence not limited to one occasion but regarded both in the beginning and the end, in short I am aware of all things being comprised within the single idea of solitude.

Chapter 9. Incidental, in praise of the solitary life

O LIFE truly peaceful and most like the life of heaven! O life excelling all other lives, free from trouble and endowed with great blessings, where salvation is expected and the yoke of the Lord weighs lightly, where one sits in silence, and having sat, rises up again! O life wholesome to man, dreadful and hateful to evil spirits who, were it otherwise, would hardly afflict with so many kinds of temptations the bodies of those they entered. O life that rehabilitates the soul, repairs our manners, renovates our affections, washes away pollution, reconciles God and man, restores the ruins of innumerable bodies, refines the intellect, moderates reckless passions and stimulates dull ones, parent of generous thoughts, nurse of virtues, conqueror and bane of vices, a ring for wrestlers, an arena for runners, an open field for soldiers, a triumphal arch for victors, a library for readers, a cell for the studious, a shrine for worshippers, and a

[5] *Lamentations*, iii, 26-28.

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mountain for the contemplative! And what shall I call it but all things in one—a blessed life suited for every good work, the life for a philosopher, poet, saint, and prophet, a life not without reason described as singular, and if I dared to utter what I think, a life so singular as to be the only true life. To all other lives we may apply what Cicero says, and after him Augustine, that this which we call our life is really death. It is a life in short that is unknown except to those who have tasted it, most precious to him who enjoys it, and to be desired above all things by him who has it not. This, too, is the opinion of Jeremiah, following whom we arrive at these commendations of the solitary life which have to be added to what has gone before, when in the great public calamity he yearned for a flow of pious tears and a wilderness suited to weeping. "Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears."[6] And knowing that this fountain does not gush forth brightly amid cities and crowds, he follows it up by adding, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men."[7] It is very easy to imagine what is needful in our case when a man who was everywhere near to God and filled with God, wishing to perform that honorable duty, (worthy of such as he), of mourning for the slain of his people, prayed for solitude and piety at the same time, as if he could not expect one without the other. He deserves to be most attentively heeded when in uttering his wish for a lodging place in the wilderness, he adds, "that I might leave my people and go from them, for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." To think of these things, to say nothing of uttering them, fills the mind with horror. But so peculiarly applicable are his reproaches to the people of our time, so little, nay, such nullity is there of faith, such nullity even of truth, of security, in short, of any human quality at all (though they are called men and are in form human), that to my mind they form clearly a sufficient cause, or at least the principal and most reasonable one, why solitude should be cultivated and cities avoided.

[6] *Jeremiah*, ix, 1.
[7] *Ibid.*, ix, 2.

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THE THIRD TRACTATE

Examples of many holy fathers of the new dispensation who led the solitary life

Chapter 1. On the solitude of Pope Silvester

BUT let me not in my reverence for antiquity appear unmindful or contemptuous of later examples. Silvester, the first of the wealthy popes, sought retirement on Mount Soracte, having a situation in harmony with his character and a name in harmony with his situation. And if there be no shame in hearing the truth, it is from a simple and barbarous wilderness that there flowed those riches (would they were a means of good!) which now cities can scarce contain. From here came the gilded shoe, from here the ivory crosier, curved in the manner of a shepherd's staff, recalling its rustic origin by its rustic decoration, from here the mantle glowing with brilliant colors, from here the diadem set with carbuncles like stars, from here the snow-white steed, the golden throne, the purple canopy for the reverend head, from here in sum the whole triumphal array, the whole institution of the church militant, as it is here called, whose rule now extends far and wide. Kings are amazed that this should have issued from a forest, and if one will regard the matter earnestly I do not know how he will deny that a solitude which has given rise to an institution so revered is itself worthy of reverence. But I proceed.

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Chapter 2. The solitude of Saint Ambrose

AMBROSE, having been appointed by divine will and compulsion to the charge of a numerous population in Milan, though from his consciousness of so serious a duty and obligation he did not dare to lead a life of entire solitude, whenever he could and in what way he could he gave evidence of his desire. He lived where the circuit of the wall now runs in a remote corner of the city, where his holy body resides to this day and where stands the sacred church established by him, renowned for its sublime worship, and attended by huge throngs of people. At that time, as may be inferred from definite indications, the place was quite out of the way and solitary in the extreme. Whenever he was free from his episcopal cares and eased from the severe and endless labors which he sustained in repelling the Arians from the church, whenever for a little while he could withdraw and steal away from his business, this holy man used to betake himself to a more private solitude in this quarter. There was a wood which though not far away was nevertheless suited for meditation; in the midst of it was a little house, capacious enough for a man who, though surely great, was also humble, and which, small as it was, was converted into the form of a temple with greater appropriateness than once the house of Pythagoras in Metapontum. The wood is now destroyed, but though the character of the place is changed, its name remains. It is commonly called Ambrose's Wood toward the left on the steep side. At this point the stream, which is noted throughout its course for its great turbulence and violent commotions, with a frenzied impetus taking a wider sweep, shuts it in between the city proper and the outer enclosure.

In this place, as I hear, and as I might infer, he strewed the honey-filled flowers of the books, of which the taste today is most sweet and the odor most fragrant throughout the domains of the church. If I may adduce a single

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passage in evidence of this man's style as well as of his deeds, he says in a certain letter to Sabinus: "I shall continue to speak with you more frequently in my writings and when I am alone." Then, converting to his own use an expression of Scipio's, of which I shall speak later, he goes on to say, "For I am never less lonely than when I seem to be alone, nor less idle than when at leisure. I summon whom I wish according to my pleasure and attach to myself those whom I like best and whom I consider most congenial. No one interrupts, no one interferes. On such occasions therefore I retain you in particular and converse with you about the scriptures, and together we chop words at great length. Mary was alone when she talked with an angel and when the Holy Ghost descended upon her and the power of the All-highest overshadowed her. She was alone and she effected the salvation of the world and conceived the redeemer of all mankind. Peter was alone and he learned the mysteries by which the nations throughout the world were to be made holy. . Adam was alone and did not go astray, because his mind was faithful to God, but after he was joined with woman he could not stay faithful to the divine commands."

Chapter 3. No poison is so destructive or so obnoxious to the life of solitude, as the company of women

IF I may intrude a little on Ambrose's discourse, I would not pass over in silence what everybody knows, though many pretend not to. There is no poison as destructive to those who would follow this life as the company of woman. For the attraction of women, the more fascinating it is, the more dreadful and baleful, to say nothing of their dispositions, than which there is naught more fickle or more inimical to the love of repose. Whoever you are that desire peace, keep away from woman,

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the perpetual source of contention and trouble. Peace and a woman rarely dwell under the same roof. The satirist says,

> Besides what endless brawls by wives are bred:
> The curtain-lecture makes a mournful bed.
> Then, when she has thee sure within the sheets,
> Her cry begins and the whole day repeats.[1]

Nor is a concubine's bed any more peaceful; there is less fidelity and greater dishonor, but the quarrelsomeness is the same. The sentence of the famous orator is well known, "The man who does not quarrel is a celibate." And what is better than not to quarrel? And what, I pray you in the name of Jesus Christ, what, I say, is more blessed than solitude, especially at night, or than silence and peace and the freedom of your own couch? Nothing is more blessed than celibacy, but for celibacy nothing is more appropriate than solitude. Whoever you are, therefore, that would avoid strife, avoid also woman; you will hardly escape the one without running away from the other. Even though her disposition be most gentle, which is a rare thing, the very presence of a woman, her mere shadow, so to speak, is an annoyance. If I am deserving of any trust, everybody who seeks solitary peace will avoid her face and her tongue no less than, I will not say a serpent's, but than the gaze and hiss of a basilisk. For not otherwise than a basilisk she slays with her eyes, and infects before she touches. To whom, do you suppose, can the application be made more justly than to us of what Virgil says with as much truth as propriety in a remote connection?

> With two fair eyes his mistress burns his breast;
> He looks and languishes, and leaves his rest;
> Forsakes his food, and, pining for the lass,
> Is joyless of the grove, and spurns the growing grass.[2]

[1] Juvenal, *Sat.* vi, 268-269 (Dryden's translation).
[2] *Georgics*, iii, 215-216 (Dryden's translation).

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Truly, in saying that merely by a look the forces of body and mind were devoured and consumed, he might have been alluding to all whom that disease emaciates and inflames, but if in adding that the same mischief erases the memory of grass and meadows, he had said it of men as he did of horses and oxen, whom else would he seem to have meant than us who find a special pleasure in groves and meadows? Hence I proclaim that the allurements of woman should be avoided and shunned by all whose purpose it is to guard their pledge sacredly and honorably, and most particularly by ourselves. And whosoever neglects this warning, let him know that he must be banished from the paradise of solitude, for the very same reason that the first man was expelled from the paradise of delight.

After this interruption I return to Ambrose who, concluding the letter to Sabinus, says, "It is clear from these instances that when we are alone we dedicate ourselves to God; then we open our mind to him, then we take off the garment of deceit." Thereupon our first parent again recurs to his memory and he says, "Adam was alone when he was placed in Paradise, but he was not alone when he was cast forth from Paradise. The Lord Jesus was alone when he redeemed the world, for it was neither a legate nor a nuncio but the Lord himself who brought about the salvation of his people, though he is never alone in whom the Father always is." Finally, wishing to close the letter with an admonition, he says, "Therefore let us also be alone, that the Lord may be with us."[3] Let not this counsel accrue to the benefit of Sabinus alone; I pray that we may apply it to ourselves and make it ours.

[3] *Migne*, xvi, 1155.

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Chapter 4. The solitude of Saint Martin

OF ST. MARTIN we know that he somehow conceived a longing for the condition of the solitary life even from childhood, and that, as soon as his years and unavoidable military service allowed, he embraced it with such zeal of spirit that even when he became bishop he did not leave off the habit he had formed in private life. Our authority for this is Severus who has described the whole course of his life of which he was himself in part a witness. We learn that at this time Martin was accustomed to complain that before getting his episcopal charge he had been more virtuous. This is remarkable, for although it is not to be believed that that man was ever anything but the acme and perfection of virtue, yet it seems that when he was bent beneath the pontifical burden he recalled a certain something in himself when he was less embarrassed that was more elevated and of clearer perfection, a memory of the time when being alone he was more free, so that it need be no occasion of surprise that he should have frequented in his earlier freedom the solitary places which he continued to resort to whenever he could while serving in a difficult office. Not to trace his steps throughout, which were a long and difficult matter, it is reported that he had formerly passed a considerable time in that very city of Milan where, as is well known, he erected the first of the many monasteries which were founded by him in different places, having his dwelling close to the house of Ambrose and the city walls, a place which even now is lonely and remote. Ambrose, who was already bishop, being rejoiced at such a guest, used to go to him alone and in secret and to linger in his company with great fondness as long as he might. Good Jesus, what a pair of men they were, what sighing, what talking! The dictates of princes, the deliberations of consuls, the edicts of prætors, the statutes of lawmakers, the speeches of the populace, the

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disputations of philosophers, the declamations of rhetoricians, the quibblings of sophists, when placed beside that holy and peaceful conversation I should not fear to call the merest trifles. The poet Horace being at Sinuessa, there came to visit him Plotius and Varius and Virgil, a brilliant fellowship of learned men bound by ties of mutual friendship, and so he exclaimed,

O what embraces, what delights were ours.[4]

I believe it indeed, and I do not doubt that between such men there was for the time a great deal of witty and elegant discourse, but I am inclined to believe that the embraces were sweeter and the joy more holy in Milan between Ambrose and Martin. The place is pointed out where according to report they were in the habit of meeting and conversing. I would rather have been present at these meetings and conversations, if I might, than at the counsel-boards of all the kings, whatever it is that they contrive with their minions when flown with wine and greed and cruelty. Blessed therefore is the solitude which earned the honor of harboring two such inhabitants at one time and which, though not so scorched or savage as the wilderness of the Thebaid, is perhaps not less glorious.

Chapter 5. The solitude of Saint Augustine

WE may not yet be permitted to depart from Milan on account of that other great inhabitant of the same city, Augustine, whom an affectionate Father turned over to Ambrose infected with evil errors, as he might entrust a son to a learned physician, in order that the latter might wash him in healthful waters and restore him healed to God. Though ignorant of all that the divine kindness was working in his behalf when he came to Milan, where the holy Ambrose was then flourishing, he had decided at last to change his way of

[4] *Satires*, i, 5, 43.

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life, and so abandoning the city, he sought the loneliness of the country, in order that, having been mad with the multitude, he might regain his wits in solitude. He calls this country place Cassisiacum and its name is preserved to this time. Indeed, finding himself in the city on the very day on which he was enkindled with his holy longing, he relates in his narrative what he did and how he conducted himself in the storms of an agitated mind through which the bark of his counsel, under God's guidance, attained to the land of the living and the haven of salvation. Verily he did not issue out in public nor summon a popular assemblage by trumpet-call and explain what he was going to do, but he sent away his most faithful companion, and arising, because, as he says himself, loneliness was suggested to him as fitter for the business of weeping, and retiring so far that even the presence of so dear a friend might not be burdensome to him, he used for his solitude a secret corner of the garden as the only refuge which the conditions of place and time permitted. There, holding bitter converse with himself, amid sobbing and weeping, tearing his hair and beating his forehead, and clasping his knee with clenched fingers and with whatever other signs a great and holy sorrow expresses itself, he at length once and for all came to that resolve concerning himself which was to be the occasion of his rejoicing ever after.[5] Finally, throughout his life he took pleasure in quiet and solitary places, such as the retirement of Monte Pisano, where he is believed to have passed extended intervals in the condition of a hermit; there is a certain book inscribed with his name to the monks of that place.

For the rest of this matter, since there is no leisure for turning over the endless writings of this man, I shall be content with a single short but clear testimony that occurs to me from his pen. In expounding the Gospel of St. John he says, "It is difficult to see Jesus in a crowd; a sort of solitude is necessary for the mind. God is seen in a kind of isolation of the attention. A crowd is a noisy thing; that vision calls for calm privacy." Do you observe how

[5] *Confessions*, Bk. viii, end.

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careful he is to say that for seeing God there is need not for any other kind of application but that of solitude, meaning thereby that as long as the human mind is filled with its inner disturbances and conflicts, physical solitude is in itself of no avail for purifying and sharpening the eyes to behold that great light? But having now treated of these three very great men, I shall allow my pen to depart not only from Milan but from Italy as well.

Chapter 6. Of Saint Jerome, the marvellous worshipper of solitude

I SHALL now pass in silence over Basil who has proclaimed the praises of this life, and also over the great Gregory Nazianzen, but I shall not pass over the illustrious disciple of the latter. Jerome, forsaking the city of Rome and scorning its wealth, being allured by a hope and longing for the eternal fatherland, and, as he himself confesses, on account of the fear of hell, betook himself first to that vast wilderness which provided a savage dwelling place for monks and which, in the letter to Eustochium on virginity, he described in a phrase of Sallust's as burned up by the ardors of the sun. After he had passed a number of years in that place in a severe campaign against the assaults of the untamed flesh and a soul which secretly abetted the tempter, he was victorious, yet he did not return from the field of battle to Rome for a triumph as if secure in his virtue, but in great haste sought refuge in the retreats of Bethlehem.

Chapter 7. Of Saint Paula and certain other devout matrons who embraced the life of solitude

IN THAT retreat was living the saintly, pious, and celebrated Paula, a true Roman matron, to say a great deal in a few words, and the most excellent example of feminine virtue in her time. For the sake of dying near

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the Lord's manger, she forgot the place and quality of her birth. Jerome himself has described her illustrious life and blessed end with such pointed brilliancy, that after him it would be more modest for me to hold my peace. For what am I to say that is worthy, in this casual way, and what am I to include in so confined a portion of my little book when a man of his great genius found himself at a stand, though at the dictation of love and sorrow he filled up the measure of a true volume? However, I know, as Jerome too is aware and makes no pretence of overlooking it, that there were not wanting those who snapped with spiteful tooth against the peaceful life of both and did not shrink from committing their venom to writing. There is scarcely any virtue so lofty or so concealed that it is not accessible to the darts of envy; but vulgar breath does not shake the solid truth. Yet whatever may have been the opinion of others concerning his solitude, the solitude of a wise man is appraised by Jerome when he writes against Jovinian: "A wise man can never die alone, for he has with him all the good men who are or have been, and he projects and transports his free mind according to his pleasure, and what he cannot compass with his body he compasses with his thought. If there should be a dearth of men, he speaks with God, being never less lonely."

But what way shall I now turn? I am confused by numbers and am solicited in different directions by the array of those who occur to my mind. The name of Paula, however, admonishes me before all to award a share of the glory of solitude to the same nation and sex. I shall therefore select a few of the many, and I shall have no fear of being called excessive in my praises of Roman matrons, in which I have no hope of being adequate. I omit Eustochium, the daughter of Paula, renowned through Jerome's commemoration, and Marcella, and Asella, and Fabiola, and Blesilla, and other virgins and widows of illustrious name. But what shall I say of you, Melania, most excellent and glorious of women? I shall not put apart with my pen such fellow citizens and neighbors, who are united by time and courtesy, by faith

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in Christ, by piety and virtue. You shall sit at Paula's side. The daughter of a Roman consul, the mother of a Roman prætor, you have by your own virtues raised yourself above the family and riches and honors of your father, and by your great devotion to chastity and your works of mercy you have conferred such grace upon the state of widowhood as almost to transcend the praises of virginity. Forgetting pedigree, forgetting children, forgetting power, and remembering only Christ, putting off affection for country, respect for parents, love for those that belong to you, and the care of your body, by the advice of Christ hating your soul in this world that you might guard it for the life eternal, with wondrous pains you sought out the holy fathers in the desert wildernesses, and following them even into exile, provided for them holy service with your labor and pious sustenance from your means—honorer of saints, rescuer of the erring, mother of pilgrims, guardian and counsellor of your fellows in Christ! For when with blessed liberality you had distributed your vast patrimony for the nourishment of the needy, and, like some inexhaustible fountain of benefits, never failed in your overflowing bounty, and when, having no other aim in life, you had gone on for thirty-seven years, your means still unexhausted and your charitable spirit unwearied, being now past the age of sixty, a desire came upon you, not earthly in quality but spiritual and divine, to revisit your family. And so returning to Rome, you directed into the way of Christ and the love of the solitary life your son, your daughter-in-law, your granddaughter (who inherited your spirit and mission as well as your name), and, to put it briefly, all your kin, but not before they had distributed their substance according to your example. It is amazing to recall what gold and silver, what silken garments, what sums of money that splendid grand-daughter of yours, zealously following in your footsteps, gave away to churches and poor members of religious orders throughout the world, how many thousands of her slaves she set at liberty for the service of Christ, what possessions she sold not only in Rome but in

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Aquitania, and even in Gaul and Spain, using the money for charity, and keeping the lands which she owned in Campania, Sicily, and Africa (so extensive was this woman's fortune) for no other end than the use of the poor and the continuous exercise of her piety. Besides, at what an age she did this, being in her twentieth year when, influenced by your admonitions and example, she renounced the world and gave up the purple flower, as it were, of life, and a brilliant marriage, and great riches and pleasures!

That their holy resolves were assisted from heaven is indeed clear from this, that the huge sum realized from her great possessions and all the rest of her treasure were disbursed to the poor by the younger Melania at just the right time, for if she had delayed a little it would all have fallen into the hands of Alaric who was then laying waste Rome and Italy. But she had already freed herself from the great burden of her wealth and converted it to better uses, as if to snatch herself and her belongings from the jaws of the wolf and bestow it gladly upon Christ at usurious interest. But you, happy old woman, having performed with no feminine superficiality all those acts which open the way to heaven, as though nothing remained to be done on earth when the portion of your time was run and the struggle of your work creditably accomplished, within two months from your return to Jerusalem you found an end of the things that pass and a happy close to a praiseworthy life and left a monastery behind you. Christ showed you great honor in that he seemed for the sake of a single woman to spare so many thousands of men and women and to put off the punishment which he had decreed or sanctioned. No sooner, indeed, did you depart from the country and from human interests than the barbaric irruption and frightful devastation overtook the city of Rome. O great lady, resplendent in your pious exile, and I know not whether more fortunate in such a life or such a death, surely your grave in the solitary dust is more illustrious than if, lacking these virtues, you lay at Rome in a marble tomb carved with empty titles.

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The house of Christ founded by your hands in Jerusalem for the service of the poor rises much more gloriously to the view than the ancestral palace in Rome, destined to be burned by the torches of barbarians or to fall into ruins with age. But too long, I admit, has the admiration of your virtue detained me in this discourse. Enough now of women and of foreign shores. Let my pen return to men and to my country.

Chapter 8. Of Pope Gregory the Great as a lover of solitude

WHAT then of our Gregory, the great head of the Roman see? Did he not convert his many magnificent houses into solitary temples, and did he not deprive himself of his ancient possessions and give them to Christ? In that way he made a solitude for himself as far as it was possible in the greatest and most populous of all cities, and where his grandfathers and great-grandfathers had received the homage of a dense throng of obsequious persons, he paid a lonely homage to his Lord. And yet the splendor of his fame drew him out of his retreat and set him in a great sea of troubles and at length on the highest pinnacle of honor. This elevation of his he often complains of with melancholy recollection, as when writing on Ezekiel he says, "When I was lodged in a monastery I was able to restrain my tongue from idle words and to keep my mind almost continuously applied to prayer, but since I have placed my heart's shoulder under the pontifical burden, my mind, dispersed in many interests, is unable to concentrate itself steadily upon itself." In the same place he has other things to say against his condition at that time, and much more in the preface to his *Dialogue*. When about to begin that book he declares that he looked for a retired place congenial to his sadness in which he might find a little repose from the storm of worldly affairs. Replying in that passage to his beloved son and cherished friend, he says, "My unhappy

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mind, afflicted by the wound of its occupation, remembers that it once was in a monastery, that very far beneath it was all the shifting show of things, that it rose far above the revolving spectacles of life, that it was accustomed to none but heavenly thoughts, that even though it was held back by the body it escaped by meditation from the prison of its flesh, and that it was in love with death (which nearly everybody looks on as a punishment) as though it were the entrance into life and the reward of its toil." Then he turns more sorrowfully to the other side of the picture and says, "But now, by reason of my pastoral care it undergoes the troubles of worldly men, and after so fair a vision of its peace it is soiled with the dust of earthly activity." It would be long to add all that follows, and not at all necessary. The end is that he declares he is more painfully tortured because of the recollection of his past life and wretched in comparison with those who live quietly, most of whom he describes as finding pleasure in this more retired way of living which I am speaking of. It is no less superfluous to follow what he writes in another work in which, suffering himself, he has expounded the suffering Job, because both these books are very well known and these things are found written at the very opening of each. I dismiss the other passages, almost fit for tears, in which he tells us that he weeps incessantly because of this elevation of his and begs his friends to weep with him, if they love him, and intercede with God for him. You may perceive that he appreciated his danger, seeing that he esteemed it a kind of death to have left off the life of solitude, and implored so pitifully the assistance of his friends in that condition. Speaking of this in a letter to Narses the patrician, he says he is so overwhelmed with sorrow that words hardly suffice him. And so it is clear that the pontificate was a grievous burden to him, as it is indeed to everybody who guards it uninjured and unblemished, and that the memory of his solitary life would have been sweet if he had not aggravated the bitterness of his altered state by comparing it with dissimilar conditions.

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Chapter 9. Of Saint Benedict, a singular and most devout dweller in solitude

BUT where does Benedict remain, the chief of the Western monks? Who among Christ's faithful does not know him or has not heard of the holy resolve of his youth? Although as a friend to virtue and an enemy to pleasure he entered on the steep way to heaven at a very early stage in his life, yet in order that he might proceed with greater advantage and safety he abandoned Nursia and Rome, for both of which he had through nature and custom contracted a fondness, having been born in one and brought up in the other. But by the care of his soul he overcame his carnal affections and in a happy boyhood sought out not merely a solitude but a desert, and that a vast one, and a cavern made for devotion; whoever beheld it thought he was somehow viewing the threshold of paradise. How he lived there, though I know, I refrain from describing, since the combined evidence of well-known writers and reputation with its free tongue have made it familiar, and proof is afforded by the great foundations of his celebrated order laid in that place. It is enough for me now to confer dignity upon our solitudes by the mere mention of so great an inhabitant and to strengthen my present argument with such a witness. It is long to enumerate, moreover, who were the men and of what sort who followed in his footsteps, the founders of venerable orders who, provoked by the fame of their leader and the stimulus of his example, or by an inclination of their nature, or by divine warning, sought out various places of solitude. As a sign there still exist sacred convents and devout churches amid the forest caverns,—Cistertium, Maiella, Carthusia, Vallombrosa, Camaldole, and numberless others. Though the waters of these orders by the growth of heavenly devotion later spread themselves far and wide and covered up the plains, yet

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if you inquired for their beginnings you would find that like the springs of great rivers they flowed from the roughest mountains. But among them all the name of Benedict is famous and illustrious. If any one wishes to learn his story and the manner of his life, I do not bid him search in hidden places, but let him read the second book of Gregory's *Dialogue*, referred to above, which is comprised entirely of his acts and in which the splendor of the subject is rendered even more brilliant by the style.

Chapter 10. Of the solitude of Saint Florentius

IF THE eye, carried along uninterruptedly, should pass over into the limits of the third book, it will behold the crowded miracles of the solitude of Italy. It will meet Florentius who, while living alone in a monastery, requested of God, with whom continuous prayer and great innocence had made him very intimate, some relief for his loneliness. At once a bear stood before him, whom Florentius tamed and made use of as a sort of shepherd to tend his few cattle. When in revenge for the bear's death, which was brought about by the malice of some of the brothers, the curse of Florentius in anger rose to heaven more swiftly than his words, he was overpowered at the fearful punishment with which the offenders were promptly afflicted, and calling himself eternally guilty and groaning at being so quickly heeded, all the rest of his life he was never free from lamentation and sorrow. I ask, what armies and what kings have with their labor attained to the power which this lonely humility attained through repose? Continuing, the eye will meet Martin, the dweller on Monte Marsico, for whom a thin trickle of water flowed perennially from the solid stone and renewed the miracle of the hard rock which once gave water in the desert. Moreover, he lived the length of three years without injury in one and the same cave with a terrible serpent

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beneath whose shape was hidden that ancient serpent who is more terrible; but the latter was finally expelled by his marvellous patience and Martin remained victoriously by himself. It will meet another, an inhabitant of Mt. Argentarium, who is without a name here but enjoys a name in heaven. When he had rubbed with dust the face of a dead man—behold something incredible and amazing, save that to a believer nothing is impossible—with dust he brought to life the bloodless corpse which soon was to be dust again. It will meet the solitary Mænas, a man of such great innocence and trust that by the awe of his name and reputation he not only pacified the barbarians who were then harrying the neighborhood, but with the small stick which he was in the habit of carrying he chastised as though they were household puppies the huge bears from the adjoining forest, who attacked the beehives of the holy man, and drove them away in terror.

Chapter 11. On the solitude of Saint Francis

IT WOULD be laborious, I admit, to include all the cases, nor is that now my concern, for I came to compose this book not with the idea of writing a history but of gleaning distinguished examples from all sources, and by no means all of those, but only such as I might gather in passing while keeping the main road in the work which I had undertaken. Shall we suppose, then, that any of these men would have arrived at such glory in their own country, or that Benedict would have done so in Nursia, or that Francis, if he had remained in Assisi, would have had either his audience of birds, or the seraphic ardor of an ecstatic mind, or that amazing proof of the holy stigmata of Christ, or the limbs that gave evidence of the wound of his mind, or so great an increase of offspring born from so brief a marriage with poverty?

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It may be, as people say, that after consulting the divine will and receiving a revelation from heaven, he chose in this place his post, not so dangerous to himself as to his soldiers, for the sake of keeping watch over the safety of great numbers in the wars of human life, yet he was himself a great lover of solitude and a votary of the wilderness.

Chapter 12. Of triple solitude, an incidental chapter, and of the solitude of Blasius and others

SOLITUDE is considered threefold, if I grasp the matter rightly: that of place, with which my present discourse is specially taken up; that of time, as in the night, when there is solitude and silence even in public squares; that of the mind, as in persons who, absorbed in deepest contemplation, in broad daylight and in a crowded market-place, are not aware of what is going on there and are alone whenever and wherever they wish. I know of no one who had recourse to all these kinds of solitude at the same time more commonly than St. Francis. He traveled through wildernesses, he often passed the night in half-ruined temples, by day and among crowds he was often snatched away from the perception of present objects and, while his body was thrust hither and thither, in collision with men, his mind remained fixed on heavenly thoughts. Hence that sense of security amid however great a throng which was afforded to him by his extremely fervent love of Christ and a body marvellously submissive to the spirit. This was the reason, I believe, that he accepted a post for himself and his followers in populous places, thinking that what was possible for him would be easy for everybody, because his soul was sublime and unbounded in abasing itself and, having been cleaned of all earthly impurities, could not be separated from Christ by any kind of disturbance. What he experienced in himself he assumed would be much easier in the case of

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others, so far did his humility deceive him in his judgment of the rest. To this view I am forced by the opinion which the holy man had of himself as the greatest of all sinners: we read that he made this reply to one of the brothers who asked him what he thought about himself. Yet in spite of all this, I have often heard his followers, men endowed with learning and religion, sighing in their inmost hearts for a life of solitude, if only the regulations of the father had permitted it. How much he himself always loved solitude is proved by his life as it is recorded in literature, and by the rules of living which he first dictated for himself and later generations on a mountain, and when it was lost rewrote in a solitude. It is proved finally by his peculiar habitation, for his place is also pointed out like that of Benedict as one among many. There is scarcely anywhere a spot more out of the way; its name is Alvernia. Into both these men, it seems, solitude struck a very sharp spur and goaded their minds, already disposed toward high endeavors, and so, while they were shrinking from notice and scorning the glory of the world, it made them widely known and illustrious over the whole earth.

Among those whom the wilderness has ennobled, the martyr Blasius must not be passed in silence, who is said to have lain hidden in caves and been visited by wild beasts and fed by birds. Nor should we overlook the brothers Leonard and Liffardus, both monks and both recluses, nor Veridimius the famous hermit, nor his companion Egidius who, though sprung, as it is reported, from a royal family of Athens, considered his pedigree, his country, his wealth, and his Greek literature, in which he was richly versed, of less account than Gallic poverty, despising everything in his zeal for solitude. Here he burst forth in miracles, such as that of the gentle deer by whose milk he had been nourished and which he rendered inviolable to the huntsmen's dogs. Being affected by such a miracle, the king of France penetrated to his cave, which was overgrown with brambles, but not without much toil on the part of his soldiers who had to open up

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a passage with their swords. Thereupon being much moved by the venerable form of the old man's appearance and by the sight of his sustainer lying beside him, the king sent away all his retinue with the exception of a single bishop, and approached the old man. Finding his great gifts magnificently scorned and recommended to other uses, he was so impressed that he acted on the old man's advice and built a convent which is still celebrated in that region, and afterwards often came to visit him, setting aside all regal pomp. It was not the splendor and equality of his origin but the honor and sanctity of his solitary life that won this man to him.

Chapter 13. Of the solitude of Saint Remigius

WHAT shall I say of Remigius, whose fame attained such splendor that it imposed upon him at a precocious age the pontifical burden, which he is reported to have supported with distinguished virtue and industry for more than seventy years? By grace of this fame he was the first to convert to the faith of Christ the king and nation of the Franks and to anoint the king with an unction said to have been sent down from heaven, which is the origin of the solemnity of anointing kings prevailing there to this day. Whence, I pray, if not from the very humblest beginnings of the solitary life did he attain to these results and this elevation? What of Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, an illustrious and a wonderful man who was driven into solitude both by persecuting insults and the desire for a retired life, and who, passing many years in deserted places, not only turned aside the slanders of his persecutors but fulfilled the highest duty of a true philosopher? What of William, a brave man and of ancient stock, who, when he had given up the flower of his life to military service, preferred to grow old in a desert and to die in consecrating the last fruits of his life to the heavenly service? What of the other William,

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alike not only in name but in ambition and rank, originally conspicuous by his worldly pomp but later by his monastic humility, who abandoned and spurned an opulent town and satisfied a wish for solitude, poverty, and silence? For though he was lord of Mt. Pessulano, he became a monk in a great forest, and, rescued from the tempests of life, cast his anchor in that convent as in a haven—a man magnificent in the world, as some one truly writes about him, but more magnificent in his flight from the world.

Chapter 14. The solitude of the Blessed Bernard

WHAT of Bernard, all whose deeds are fresher and better known, who, being noted for his physical beauty. and good birth, in the very flower of his youth reflected on the fruits of his soul and entered upon solitude? And he was not content to do it by himself but drew his five brothers into the same way of life, in connection with which the following things are worthy of report. When one of the brothers, Gerard, showed an aversion to the fraternal admonitions because of his interest in the military career, and mocked at the better plan, and opposed it, Bernard, being stirred with heavenly zeal, predicted that before long a hostile dart would pierce the exceeding hard breast that was inaccessible to the warnings of God, and he put his finger on the spot threatened by the wound, saying, "Here, here, shall you be struck; but at least along with the pain to your body there will steal in the salvation of your soul." This happened as it was prophesied, and when his mind had been tried by misfortunes, his soldierly severity was softened to a monastic tenderness, so that soon he was yearning for what he had previously been ridiculing. Another, the youngest of the family, when, being himself at the time probably busy with boyish games, he saw all his brothers departing for the solitude, and when the

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eldest was saying to him amidst his parting caresses, "To you, Lunardus," (for that was the boy's name) "will fall the entire possession of the land which should have belonged to all of us," he spoke up beyond his years and said, "That is not at all a fair division, that you should all possess heaven and I the earth." To this answer he shortly gave effect with deeds, being the last of the brothers to walk the path, and by giving up the earth to seek heaven through solitude. And so not a single one of them remained attached to the lands. For this outcome the pious mother ought without doubt to be considered in part responsible. From infancy she so brought up her sons that their manhood might find them content with the most sparing nourishment and more inclined to the life of religion and solitude than to the pleasures of the city. With such habits and such domestic training the offspring grew up in striking resemblance to the mother, a truly noble and saintly family, generous shoots of a fertile vine, which would have been so esteemed even if they had sprouted elsewhere than among the Allobroges.

But though they were all fervent and all eager for the ascent to their heavenly home, yet was Bernard pre-eminent among them all, who, being third in the order of his birth was first in the resolution of rebirth, and at the last drew after him his aged father and only sister. I shall omit the praises of his eloquence and his abstinence since they are known to everybody, but I cannot pass over that excellent and brilliant observation of his which is so strikingly in accord with what I am here discussing. He was accustomed to say that all the literature which he knew (and I know of no one in his time who was better equipped) he had learned in the woods and fields, and not with the aid of human instruction but with prayer and meditation, and that he had never had any other masters than the oaks and beeches. I like to cite this, because if I am permitted to claim any knowledge myself, I should wish to say—and unless I deceive myself I can say it truthfully—that the same thing was true in my case.

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Arnulfus of Metz, the noble solitary and bishop of that city, might, I think, hold a place here of right, and so might Eucherius who, conspicuous first by noble blood and the dignity of senatorial rank and even more illustrious later for his religion and solitude, lived most perseveringly in a savage cave in the region of Lyons and finally was elevated to the bishopric of that city, neither through his own ambition nor the suffrages of men, but because of his compelling merits and of a surprisingly glorious revelation by angels. That you may know it to be truly a land of saintly solitudes, it was in this region that Romanus and Domitianus first lived as lonely hermits and then flourished as celebrated abbots. And, if I may mix up an example from across the seas with those from across the Alps, Ursacius, known originally for his military activity, afterwards abandoned that and became better known as a soldier of Christ and led a life of solitude famous for its miracles as well as its saintliness near Nicæa in Bithynia. But we have wandered long enough among foreign haunts of the solitary, we must return to those of Italy.

Chapter 15. The solitude of Carloman

WHO does not remember Carloman, the uncle of that Charles who is called the Great? While sharing the throne with his brother Pepin, he withdrew both from kingdom and kingly cares and journeyed to Rome with the idea of resting. There he assumed the monastic habit and sought the refuge of Silvester on Monte Soracte. But when he had spent two years there in the peace he desired, at last the place appeared to be unsuited to his wish, growing daily less solitary, because of the frequent and excessive gatherings in his honor of pilgrims from his country, seeing that the spot is known, and visible from a great distance to those who travel to

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Rome along the road. He therefore removed to the more retired and distant Benedictine convent of Monte Casino, and there, while his brother and nephew were toiling for a perishable throne, he enjoyed what he longed and looked for, a peaceful seclusion and a tranquil ending to his life.

Chapter 16. On the solitude of Romualdus

AFTER him in time comes another who in merit, however, is before him,—Romualdus, a noble citizen of Ravenna, sprung from a distinguished race of warriors. Though swelling in his early age with the insolence of wealth and youth and rank, and devoted to the fascinations of the world, his mind was so aspiring that in the midst of the pleasures of that time and his youthful pursuits he was always sighing for a saintly solitude. Often in his hunting when he came upon the silent recesses of the woods, he would stop as though suddenly transfixed by a heavenly yearning and say to himself, "O what a delightful spot! how peaceful, and how suitable for those who desire to serve God! How much more happily the friends of God may live here than in the cities!" And so the high spirited youth who had gone forth into the forest to capture wild beasts, his piety not yet ripened though already beginning to blossom, reflected on the business of capturing souls for Christ. Nor could such a thought long remain unfruitful, for he who is fed by the holy ghost must grow in power steadily. In the very flower of his age he abandoned fame, pleasure, riches, father, country, and everything in the world, and escaping from the man that he had been in order to find the new man he was to be, he applied himself entirely to cultivating the solitary habits of a hermit's life.

His first step when he left the world was not a long one; he settled at the monastery in Classe, a short distance from the walls of his native city. After nearly three years there, being shocked with the vices of the brothers,

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in an access of devoutest humility he made his way to a certain Marinus, a man as saintly as he was simple, who was leading the life of a solitary in the territory of the Venetians and whose reputation had reached the ears of Romualdus. He endured the authority and discipline of this man, which was marked more by earnestness than by prudence, with the greatest patience, and received not only his rebukes but his blows with such an even and submissive spirit that he finally extorted the admiration he deserved. Subsequently, for important and honorable reasons they crossed over into France, it being a question of the salvation of the soul of Pietro Orseoli, the Venetian doge, who was giving up his sovereignty and leaving the world in their company. Not long after, Marinus, observing the growth in Romualdus of spiritual powers, felt no shame in becoming the disciple of one who had but now been a disciple to him, and in yielding obedience to one who had been receiving his commands.

From this place, to the great sorrow of the people among whom he had spent a considerable time, he escaped by feigning madness. This subterfuge was necessary, because the veneration of the natives for him was such that they had thoughts of killing him, wishing if they could not keep him in their midst alive at least to retain his body like some treasure to provide for the greater security of their country. The motives for his return to Italy were not less legitimate, but rather more so, than for his departure. He wished to be in time to rescue his father Sergius from the danger which was threatening his soul. The latter, having taken the cowl and been received into the monastery of St. Severus near Ravenna, was thinking of withdrawing his neck from the religious yoke and returning to the world. When tidings of this reached Romualdus, he sought out his father and, finding he could produce no effect with words and entreaties, he ceased to regard him as the parent to whom he owed duty and looked on him as the monk over whom he had spiritual authority. He confined his pernicious cravings with health-restoring chains, exercising a pious

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severity toward his earthly father in order to save him from the severity of the eternal father. The outcome was happy, for Sergius, being roused by these harsh measures, experienced a change of heart, and accepting his punishment as though imposed not by a son but a father, he altered his purpose with wondrous repentance and showed such a transformation that soon with his tears he had washed away his sins, and refreshed with the beatific vision, he gave up by a sacrificial death the weight of the body he had loved and the snares of the world he had longed for.

It is a long matter to treat of the laborious campaigns of this man in the service of Jesus Christ and of his zealous expeditions not only throughout Italy and beyond the Alps, but overseas as well. So frequent and toilsome were these that they are with justice excused by his biographer; for to this man vainly desiring concealment, there flowed wherever he happened to be a numberless multitude of those who wished to serve God from among the distinguished as well as the humble, so that he had no sooner by his exhortations supplied one place with a company chosen for Christ and appointed a superior over it, than, completely innocent of sloth and unacquainted with rest, this most saintly shepherd of souls felt impelled to move to another spot in search of a new flock for his master amid new pastures. It would be long, moreover, to give the names of all the famous men whom in the course of his travels he acquired as disciples for himself and servants for Christ, among whom were dukes and counts and sons of counts and even the Emperor Otho, although the last because of his delays and postponements was prevented by death from fulfilling the vow which he had made to the saint. It would be long even to speak of the places in which he lived, of the hermitages which he filled with his holy followers, of the deserts he frequented, the churches he built.

Among his undertakings the hermitage of the Camaldolese in the province of Arezzo enjoys the greatest celebrity, an order and a settlement which he established and

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presided over, performing all his duties with such great devoutness, mocking his appetite with such severe fasts and such abstinence from delicate food, praying with so many sighs and tears and such intensity and fervor of spirit as no style could ever do justice to. And with this solicitude, moreover, so continuous, so anxious, so indefatigable to the last, that like Cæsar, but with a different ambition, thinking nothing done as long as something remained to be done, he had scarcely brought to completion these holy edifices than he was beginning in haste to lay new foundations, as if he had quite decided to convert the whole city into a hermitage, and all men to monks. And in the midst of it, what annoying persecutions he endured, not only from devils but from men, particularly his own followers, and with what patience and fortitude! In adversity what alertness and gaiety he had,—a great proof of a substantial mind,—and in all circumstances a brow marked by its constant serenity, such as is attributed to Socrates and Lælius, to whom our saint is comparable in evenness of temper but superior in piety and religion. And what authority there was combined with this cheerfulness of countenance, and something divine in his expression, at once venerable and awe-inspiring, so that good men loved and bad men feared him, even though they were great and powerful, and trembled before him as if they were in the presence of God. To such a degree that the Roman Emperor, Otho the younger, visited him in friendship and reverence and reposed at night in his chamber. Another emperor, Henry, when the holy man, having yielded to his entreaties and those of his disciples, appeared before him, promptly rose to meet him with a cheerful and respectful manner, and with a pious sigh broke out into these words, "Would that my soul were in your body!" And the company of the imperial knights, surrounding the man of God and bowing humbly before him, with devout importunity vied among themselves, not without great sorrow to him, in tearing shreds from the garment in which he was then clothed in order to carry them back to their country as precious and holy

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relics,—so did the great repute of his sanctity soften even those barbaric spirits! Moreover, Raynerius, the Marquis of Tuscany, declared that he did not fear the countenance of the Emperor or of any mortal whatsoever as much as that of Romualdus, and that in his presence neither tongue nor brain was of any value to him.

Finally, what miracles were performed by heaven through him in life and after death which, it is clear from many celebrated evidences, were accomplished through the power and grace of God's presence! There are two cases in particular; one is of the brother of a certain Gregory whom he cured of an intolerable pain in the head just by breathing on him, and he expelled not a mere pain but actual madness from another with a single kiss. On being restored, this patient affirmed that no sooner had the man's holy lips touched him than he felt issuing from his mouth the breath of an intenser air, and being promptly filled up therewith he recovered his former health. What else should I believe that it was but that spirit which bloweth where it listeth, with which this man most acceptable to God was truly filled? These matters, I say, are long to recount and not at all necessary, since a book has been published about them by the historian I have mentioned before, a contemporary and fellow-citizen of his, a man of remarkable saintliness and learning and himself a recluse, of whom I shall treat in the next chapter.

To give the sum of the matter, therefore; of the one hundred and twenty years to which his life extended the first twenty were spent in the world, three in a monastery whose rule he accepted under constraint and laid aside voluntarily, and in the remaining ninety-seven he led the eremitic life in constant vigilance, never pausing, bringing forth fruit everywhere, and, as it is written of him, impatient of barrenness, and therefore at all times and in all places anxiously bent with his whole body and soul on no other end than the profit of souls. At the end, being worn out with sickness and age, he hastened as a tired wayfarer toward evening to an inn, to a familiar part of Italy in the region of Picenum or Umbria and to the

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monastery of Val de Castro which he had himself erected and where he predicted that he would die before the lapse of twenty years. And there, after performing the most extended labors, he found a happy repose and closed his solitary life with a solitary end, which I have not read, to my knowledge, of any save the first hermit, Paul. For when he felt that the last hour of that day and of his life was at hand, he ordered the brothers who were present to go away and to return the next morning, deceiving them with a pious fraud in order that, having served Christ in solitude, he might go to him in solitude to claim the reward for his service, and he drew himself together, both his blessed spirit and worn-out body, and so, unaccompanied by men but having the companionship of angels, he departed from here into the life eternal.

Chapter 17. The solitude of Peter Damianus

WE COME next to Peter who bears the surname of Damianus. There is great disagreement among those who treat of the life and actions of this man, some conveying him from the retirement of solitude into the cares of ecclesiastical business while others on the contrary withdraw him from the very arena of those cares and the turmoil of affairs into the peace of a silent leisure. Yet either version redounds to the praise of this life, since either solitude made him worthy of so great a responsibility or seemed itself so worthy as to be preferred to so great a dignity. Others combine the accounts, for when, in searching more precisely for the truth, I sent men to the monastery in which he had lived to report to me all that they could find, I learned from the statements of the religious inmates of that place that in the beginning he had indeed been a solitary, that he had then been raised to a high place and finally returned once more to solitude. If this is so, then it is clear what his final decision favored, and at the same time we have a single ex-

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ample of solitude which unites in itself the twofold honor of fitting such men for the world and receiving them back in this way. And I am persuaded to believe it by certain letters of his which, after hearing these statements, I recalled particularly to my memory. His expressions vary according to the condition of life in which he found himself at different periods; one time being engaged in affairs, as it seems to me, he sighs for the peace of his lost leisure; another time, while enjoying leisure, he recalls the disquietude of the affairs he has been through. The recollection of this is at present clear to me. Leaving out the other things, therefore, as aside from my purpose, this Peter, as far as I can infer from his last writings, occupied a high place in Rome, not without commendation, being scarcely less brilliant in eloquence than in rank. But you shall now hear what resolve he came to. Leaving that office and the shows of the world to his associates, he deemed preferable to these perishable honors the most quiet isolation in the middle of Italy on the left slope of the Apennines, about which he has written a great deal and which still preserves the ancient name of Fonte Avellana. His retirement there was no less glorious than his previous conspicuous life at Rome, and it was no dishonor to him to have exchanged for a rough covering the glittering ornaments of his lofty station.

Chapter 18. The solitude of Pope Celestinus who was called Peter before his rise to the Papacy

THE extreme unusualness of the thing would have rendered this Peter's scorn of rank illustrious, if his example had not been dimmed by the more recent and more splendid scorn of another Peter, a Roman pontiff who was known as Celestinus. He laid down the papacy like a deadly encumbrance and retreated with such eagerness to an ancient solitude that one would think he

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had been freed from the shackles of an enemy. Let any one who chooses ascribe this action of the solitary and holy father to meanness of spirit, for it is permissible to have not only differing but opposite opinions on the same subject according to the variety of our minds. In my view, it was advantageous both to himself and to the world, for to both might his elevation have been perilous, uncertain, and troublesome because of his inexperience in human affairs, which he had neglected in long meditation on the divine, and because he had long yearned for solitude. As to the way in which the act appeared to Christ, there is proof in the miracle which God revealed through him on the first day which dawned after his renunciation, which surely would not have happened if the deity had not approved what he had done. Moreover I regard it as the action of a mind highly exalted and emancipated, knowing no yoke and truly celestial, and so I feel that it could have been performed only by a man who estimated human things at their true value and trampled beneath his feet the proud head of fortune. This passage has need of the support of Ambrose, particularly of the book in which he encourages the holy virgin Demetria to the observance of true humility. "It is not," he says, "as the lovers of this world think, the sign of a poor courage or a low mind to despise earthly riches and to disdain frail honors and not to seek glory in places where the sinner is approved in the desires of his soul and he who does injustice is blessed." Therefore if that contempt of present things is rightly understood in its tendencies and aspirations, nothing will be found more upright, nothing more lofty than minds of this order, which reach beyond nature in their most hallowed longings, and whose solicitation is not directed toward any creature, however powerful or admirable, but to the Creator himself of all things visible and invisible, to approach whom is to acquire splendor, to fear whom is to rejoice, to serve whom is to rule.

Who, I ask, in any place or any time was more worthy than Celestinus of being celebrated with such praise? Some men left their boats and their nets, some their small

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possessions, some the gathering of taxes, some even kingdoms and the hope of kingdoms, and following the Lord Christ were made apostles, were made saints and friends of God. But who in any age, especially since it began to be held in such great esteem, ever scorned the papacy, than which there is no loftier station, (a thing so much sought after and so admired that they derive the word from wonder and amazement) as did that Celestinus with so wonderful and exalted a spirit, being anxious for his original name and place and for a poverty congenial to the moral life, and unmindful of earth as he turned his gaze on heaven? Who that has read the account, worthy of another pen, of the marvellous works which he performed, as it is divided into the three periods—before his elevation, after his descent, and while he was on the throne,—does not perceive that he was equally pleasing to God in any condition? But what wonder that the virtue of works was not lacking in him, when the tenor of his mind was single and his life without change even where conditions admitted it? On the highest peak of the world and in the stately chamber of the pope, he lived meditating on his narrow, eremetic cave,—lowly on an elevation, solitary amid the throng, poor in the midst of riches. Besides, from the very beginning he attempted flight with a certain disciple of his, Roberto Salentino, then a young man; being surrounded by a sudden and unlooked for multitude and seeing no hope of escape, he turned to his disciple and asked whether he would like to follow him to the exalted place, dragged and constrained in that way. But the other, who had learned from his master to despise the world and to love Christ and the things by which Christ is reached,—virtue, peace, silence, and solitude,—replied, "I ask you to spare me the toil and danger, and that you would be pleased rather to make me your successor in a barren cell and a secure leisure than a sharer in glory with its riches and cares." And so it was settled. For he stayed while the father went to Rome, and it is said that not long after he saw his soul ascending from its twofold prison to the starry seats, and being ignorant of

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the facts and amazed at the miracle, he asked whether he was commanding him then to follow or to do something else. The other encouraged him to remain in the solitude, and so going up toward heaven he disappeared as he spoke. But the disciple remembered the advice, and living down to our own time, he departed a few years ago, full of days, after his master, and left behind him a great reputation of holiness and the fame of marvellous works.

But I come back to Celestinus, whose descent from the throne by its joyousness and spontaneousness made it clear how sad and how contrary to his will had been his elevation. I have heard those who saw him tell that he fled with great joy and with marks of spiritual cheer in his eyes and on his brow when he was running away from the sight of the Council, restored at last to himself as a free man, looking not as if he had withdrawn his shoulder from a flattering burden, but his neck from the fatal axe, and that in his countenance there shone a kind of angelic light. And not without reason, for he knew what it was he was trying to regain and was not ignorant of what he was giving up. In truth he was going back from toil to rest, from mad disputations to divine intercourse, and was leaving the city and going in imagination (and if the arrogance of his successor had not hindered him he would have gone actually on foot) to a mountain, rugged and steep I admit, but from which he had a smooth path to heaven. Would we had lived with him! And this I say particularly of him among so many followers of the solitary life because the wish was never closer to the goal of its desire. For we are parted by no great interval, and it was only necessary either for him to linger a little while or for us slightly to accelerate our pace in order that we might perform together that journey which he performed with our fathers.

And how many sacred monasteries of the order were established by him in a short space of time through the whole extent of Italy, even as far as the Alps! Already, as I hear, the pious work in its diffusion has crossed beyond the Alps. His religious succession endures and will

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continue to endure. The children he has brought forth in solitude are alive, while those that were born in the palace and whom he raised either to be cardinals of the church or to its other honors have all long since perished, so much firmer are the foundations of holy solitude than of the world! They may therefore mock who saw him, to whom holy poverty and the rude scorn of wealth seem a base thing in comparison with the splendor of gold and purple, but I shall admire this man and count him among the rarest, and call it a loss not to have seen him, for his sight might have afforded great profit and a brilliant example to such as were attempting the rugged ways of the higher life. For the rest, his present renown and consecrated name give countenance to his admirers and give the lie to his detractors. But God be thanked, we have become so high-spirited that we may hope these two Peters are destined to be without rivals and that pusillanimity like theirs will be without an example in our time.

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THE FOURTH TRACTATE

Digressive, complaining and lamenting for the loss of the holy land, and the negligence, sloth, and cowardice of our princes and popes

Chapter 1. Peter the Hermit, a particular lover of solitude, in connection with whom the complaints here referred to are introduced

BUT here I am, contrary to my expectation, recalled once more to France, and while I am going about amongst the famous solitaries I seem to hear from afar a third Peter, as though he were crying out at my back that he ought not to be passed over, and so I am constrained to stop. This is Peter the Hermit who once led the solitary life in the region of Amiens, where however he did not remain hidden. For when Christ was beginning to grow indignant and wrathful at his own inheritance having been so long trampled upon by his enemies and ours, he did not reveal his wishes to any of those Christian kings enamored of comfortable sleep on down and purple, nor to Urban, the Pope of Rome, who, though an earnest and accomplished man, was preoccupied, but to Peter, a poor, inactive solitary, sleeping on a humble cot. He first inspired him to gird himself in haste for the voyage across the sea in order that by a direct view of the miseries he might be made more eager for the pious business. When he had arrived at the place to which he had been ordered, Peter was shocked by the wretched servitude of Simeon, who was then patriarch of

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Jerusalem, and of the other faithful ones, and by the sad defilement of the holy places. Groaning and praying, and passing nights in vigils on the naked floor of the church, he was at length overcome by sleep. And when he had fallen asleep, Christ again appeared to him, ordering him to rouse the pastors and Catholic princes for the vindication of his name. How devotedly he undertook so great a mission and one so far beyond his strength, how energetically and how faithfully he carried it out, Christ favoring his pious exertions, and how fully he succeeded, it is not now time to describe, especially as the thing is known even to the general public through two volumes of considerable size written in a passable style in the vulgar tongue. And since I observe that in the case of this man too the minds of writers are variously inclined, I follow in doubtful points those whom I judge more worthy of trust and whom I think to be influenced by an attention to facts rather than persons.

It were to be wished that the immediate issue had been the permanent result, that the vengeance of Christ had been as enduring as it was fortunate, and that there had been no return because of men's sins to former miseries after so victorious an event. It is all the more disgraceful, inasmuch as to have lost again what was ours is more discreditable to us and more creditable to the enemy than not to have recovered it; it serves to diminish our hopes and to increase theirs for future control and is the occasion of their cruelty toward us. But now why do I weep or why do I complain over the manger, over Mount Calvary, the stone of the sepulchre, the Mount of Olives, the Valley of Judgment, and all the other places, singularly beloved of Christ, where he took humanity upon him and was brought forth into the light, where he cried on being born, where he crawled as a child, where he played as a boy, where he taught as a man, where he gave up his living breath for us, where he lay in death and came to life again, whence he descended to hell, whence he rose to heaven, where at last he shall judge both the living and the dead with an irrevocable sentence? And now shall the

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Egyptian dog hold this land which was promised to our forefathers and snatched away from us, which was destined for us if we were men,—the center of our hope, the pledge of our eternal home? Alas, what besides groans and complaints is left for a miserable man, when even our kings love nothing but pleasures and our popes nothing but riches, when the people either weep in their bondage or rage in their freedom, and everybody seeks his own interest, no one that of Christ, whose special patrimony is being destroyed while we are sitting idly by and looking on? What do I say, or why do I speak of these most active persons as idle? Verily while we are raging and meditating foolishness, while we are rolling about in filth and taken up with our pleasures, striving to keep them in our grasp as they flit by, while we are counting and hoarding the money of the poor, while we are building useless and tasteless towers in the latest Babylon so that our pride, in preparation for its fall, may mount to heaven, there is no one who will guard or vindicate the humble seat of Christ. Finally while we are laying siege against our brothers, we offer our side unguarded and unarmed to the impious enemy and supply him with an approach to the chamber of our king—an enormous crime and a lasting shame to our armies before which we impudently advance the banner of Christ in order thus magnificently to avenge the insults to him which he in fact might himself with a nod avenge, and is perhaps avenging with a hidden justice, looking down meanwhile from on high upon our faith.

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Chapter 2. The rebuke of our kings and princes who apply themselves to sleep, pleasure, disgraceful gain, despoiling of subjects, and other vices, while none of them is moved by the loss of the Holy Land

BUT we are either listless, or consumed with the passions of our minds. Behold now how with insatiable lust and flaming hatred the kings and princes of the earth quarrel about some narrow strip of profane and barbaric soil. But suppose that they were in agreement, what public good were to be hoped from that? Never shall Herod and Pilate agree unless against the Lord and against Christ and his command. Probably they shall take their ease, and apply themselves to sleep and pleasure, and chase after disgraceful gains, and despoil their subjects in civic guise as they despoil them in military guise, for what is a necessity in time of war shall become a privilege in time of peace. Every one shall love his wife and children, no one God and his neighbor. There shall be as much thought for the body as disregard of the soul. They shall accumulate gold, jewels, and valuable furnishings, but they shall despise the ornaments of the virtues. They shall love their own fields, for these they shall not fear to fight and contend and die; but no one shall be moved by the loss of the entire Holy Land. Why, I ask, unless because what I have said is absolutely true, because the former seem to be matters of individual concern while the latter concern Christ? And so, despising the glory of our creator and redeemer, we seek our own, nor does it enter our minds that Lucifer once fell from heaven through the very conduct by which today we hope to ascend to heaven.

But if you are loth to put your faith in words, you will at least believe the facts, which, as it is said, are not in

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the habit of lying. Look about you, I pray, and survey the countries and ask what is happening among us. The Frenchman and the Briton are quarreling. Twenty-five years have revolved since Mars and Bellona instead of Christ and Mary have held sway over those kings, and although the iron on both sides is already growing soft, their spirits of iron are not at all assuaged and the rain of blood does not allay the great flames of their wrath. Though it happened unexpectedly even among us, among our grandfathers and great-grandfathers it was unheard of that a much inferior enemy should drag away in chains one who but now was by far the greatest of our kings, as if fortune could no longer bear the weight of so great a kingdom. But for all that there is no end to the matter, for the eldest son of the captured king is again making trial of arms. Therefore, as you see, the war now rages with special fury, the royal armies now join battle afresh, and the blood which should have been shed for Christ is devoted to hatred.

The greater Spanish lord out of cowardice permits his brothers within his territory (alas, the shame!), wickedly to blaspheme the majesty of Christ on a narrow rock. The one who occupies our seacoast thirsts for and thinks about nothing but the gold in Venice and the blood of Genoa, being at the behest of avarice the satellite of one and the enemy of the other, bound by one party with gold, conquered by the other with steel. But the remotest of the kings has been deafened by the sound of the ocean waves advancing and receding, and from his great distance he does not hear our sighs, but being buried in the extreme west has no care for what the East is doing.

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Chapter 3. Accusation of the Roman Emperor and the Pope, adding thereto the Germans and Greeks

THIS Cæsar of ours snatched a crown and went away to Germany, content with his obscure land and the mere name of the empire whose lowest members he embraces while disdaining the head. The man who we hoped would recover what had been lost does not dare to preserve his own, and running away from the holy embraces of his spouse, though no one is pursuing, he shudders at the face of fair Italy, as if anything fairer existed under the heavens! I confess that my warm and headlong faith, which has not been afraid to inveigh against the very greatest, holds him blameworthy. He excuses himself and swears he has vowed to the church not to spend more than one day in Rome. O infamous day, O shameful compact, O ye hosts of heaven, is this a vow, is this religion, is this piety? A Roman pontiff has so deserted his Rome that he does not wish it to be visited by another and bargains about it with a Roman emperor. I do not know what to say here, and if I knew it would be prudent to hold my peace, but there is one thing which in my silence the facts should proclaim, that he who removes the dweller from the city would bring in the ploughman there if he could. Let him see how just is such a desire.

Germany has no other aim than to arm mercenary brigands for the destruction of the state, and from her clouds she showers down a continuous rain of iron upon our lands. It is deserved, I do not deny, for it falls upon an abject people. Italy ruins herself with her own laws, and when she does draw breath, the love of gold, more potent than the love of Christ, seizes on the minds of its people and scatters them over all the lands and seas. Greece, turned away by her own errors or our pride, despises the ancient fold and our pastures.

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Chapter 4. How the Catholic Faith was of old diffused through well-nigh the entire world, but is now reduced through the negligence of the great

IT IS a superfluous labor to speak now of other kings and earthly lords and of our Roman pontiffs. It is all common knowledge. Hence, indeed, results the present state of Europe and hence it is painful to proceed further in the description. But it behooves us to touch the wounds which, though they are not at all far from the head and vital members, have putrefied from their location and long neglect.

Augustine, though he was born in Africa, says in his *Confessions* that Homer was hard for him because of being written in a foreign language while Virgil was easy because he wrote in his own, that is, the Latin language. But measure Africa now and roam over it on the wings of thought from the bosom of the Nile to the Atlantic Ocean, and I believe you will not find any one there who understands or loves our literature, unless he chance to be some pilgrim, or merchant, or captive. Jerome, writing to Evander, also affirms that besides France and Britain, countries of our region, Africa and Persia and the East and India and all the barbaric lands worshipped Christ alone and observed the single true rule of life. How far this holds at present it is not even expedient to mention. To touch on a later witness of our dishonor, does not Gregory somewhere give thanks and rejoice that in his time all of Asia adhered to the faith? Now, alas, you may go through all the extensive windings of the oriental shore from the left bank of the Tanais to the right bank of the Nile, and you may examine the entire tract, its territory and its men, that lies between those far distant limits of the world and the surface of our own sea, and though some one may still be found there who has the

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name of Christ in his mouth, I believe there is no one who has the true faith of Christ in his heart, unless he belongs to the class of those that are held there by pilgrimage, traffic, or imprisonment.

But let a fourth witness now come to the support of the clear truth. An authentic letter of Athanasius, sent to Jovinian Augustus, testified that in his time all the churches agreed in this true religion of Christ, not only those established in Spain and Britain, to begin from the remotest, but in France, Italy, Sardinia, Cyprus, Crete, and Dalmatia, and also in Cappadocia, and Mysia, and Macedonia, and in all Hellas, and in addition throughout Africa, Pamphilia, Lycia, Isauria, and in all Egypt and Lybia and Pontus, and in the entire orient, except for a few Asian sectaries. And in this, he himself declares, he is not following rumor but reporting actual investigations, having by examination informed himself of everybody's opinion, and possessing written proof as well as the assurances of men. But if, perchance, the matter calls for additional witnesses, Ambrose, in the second book of the *Vocation of All Gentiles*, and after him Augustine himself, *On the Ninety-Fifth Psalm*, place the boundaries of the Christian faith more widely than those of the Roman Empire, observing in that connection that the yoke of a people ruling with iron could not have reached as far as the faith of Christ ruling by the cross. Inasmuch as they agree in saying this in relation to the real empire and not to what is now only the image and shadow of an empire, I could wish it might be true in our time as well. Then would not all Africa be sick, nor Persia, nor Syria, nor Egypt, nor well-nigh all of Asia, nor finally, what is more serious still, the greater part of Europe. For the ancient Roman Empire, as famous writers testify, lacked only a small portion of the East, while we, alas, lack nearly everything except a small portion of the West. I believe there is no person so wanting in faith and so dull that he does not realize how much credit and authority attaches to these writers individually as well as to them all collectively in the matter of this particular com-

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plaint. And what they all say, with something to boot, is compressed in very few words by Augustine not far from the beginning of his book on *The True Religion*. "In every part of the earth inhabited by man," he says, "the holy Christian practices are handed down:" a brief saying, but fraught with tears for us, by which we may easily measure all the vastness of our loss.

But why do I lean on the evidence of individuals? Let the ecclesiastical histories be perused. By how many names are we met there of Catholic leaders who assembled a thousand years ago from the furthest north and east and south to strengthen and popularize the holy teaching of Christ, where today there is not only no bishop but no Christian living! To pass over less serious cases and to be silent about other cities which had the same beginning and a similar end, the venerable town Nicæa itself, where the foundation of the faith of the Apostles was compacted and strengthened with the mortar of powerful reasons by so many and such holy old men,—workmen in behalf of truth,— and all Bithynia as well, of which it is a part, are now possessed by the enemies of the faith. Is this the way we are ruled? Is this the care our princes have for the state? Is this how we crave for others' possessions, that we may lose our own? I might easily console myself in other respects with silence and forgetfulness, but what shall I say to you, betrayed and forsaken Jerusalem? Let us carry this wound, continually fresh, in our eyes and faces; there is no way in which it can be covered up and disguised, and we bear rather more easily the burden of injury than of shame. Besides, is this our hope of salvation? Is this our pursuit of glory? Are the holy places thus being trampled on? While our members are inactive, is our head being thus mangled with impunity by the Egyptian dog, and are impious feet insulting the sanctuary of Jesus Christ, while he himself because of our dishonor is suffering his injuries with patience or, as I have said, perhaps avenging them in hidden ways? Amid so many and such general misfortunes, is there any one who dares

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disparage the glory of the ancient Romans and to pollute his mouth with such falsehoods? Alas, deeply unworthy that we are! For us provision has been made by the great favor of heaven, though our deserts are naught! O truly gratuitous gifts of God! For here, when I am seized by the agitation of my sorrow and the fever of my mind, my grief grows bold and my indignation eloquent, and abundant matter of complaint issues forth.

Chapter 5. Of the high virtue of the ancient Romans in comparison with the moderns

SAY, father, for it pleases me to put the question, if Julius Cæsar should come back today from the lower regions, bringing with him his former spirit and power and if, living in Rome, that is, his own country, he should acknowledge the name of Christ, as he doubtless would, do you think that he would any longer suffer the Egyptian thief, "the multitude so effeminate of Pelusian Canopus,"[1] as the poet calls it, to possess not alone Jerusalem and Judea and Syria but even Egypt and Alexandria, when he remembered that he had once wrested kingdom, spouse, and life from a legitimate king, and that at his own peril he had conquered those lands in order to make a present of them to Cleopatra? I do not inquire into the justice of the performance, but I admire his force and energy of spirit and declare it necessary to our own time. For with what ease would the action of the believer have restored his own to Christ, knowing he had received from him his soul and was destined to receive eternal glory, when he gave to a concubine such a prize for adultery? If Cæsar Augustus, if both the Scipios, if the great Pompey, or a thousand others should come to life again in the same city, initiated in the holy rites of the Christian faith,

[1]Lucan, viii, 543.

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would they suffer the name of their Christ to be held in contempt in the regions associated with their glory—the first one in Spain, where by the majesty of his name he composed the disorders which had troubled it for centuries, the next two in Africa which one of them made a tributary and the other quite destroyed, and the last in the northern and eastern regions where he bound with chains the necks of so many kings? If, wanting the light of true faith, they dared such great enterprises for an earthly country, what do you suppose they would not have dared prosperously, with Christ as leader, for their eternal country?

Chapter 6. The character of our princes compared with Mahomet

BUT our princes and exalted leaders of men, in their chamber braver than lions, in the field tamer than deer, dishonor masculine countenances with effeminate minds, being very alert for nocturnal wars but otherwise pacifically inclined, and spirited in nothing else than the pursuit of luxury and the hatred of virtue. Those whom they are unable to imitate and whom they ought at least to have revered or admired in silence, they persecute and disdain. But there is nothing unusual in finding that models of virtue are annoying to the enemies of virtue or that those who sympathize with Mahomet in many ways, should agree with him also in this. The latter, as I believe it is written, has blessed Mecca and Jerusalem among cities and cursed Rome and Antioch. It is worth while to inquire deliberately into the reasons of his blasphemies, but I find nothing at all to disturb me in his references to Mecca and Rome. For what novelty is it that an adulterous and licentious fellow should have enjoyed the city of Mecca, the profane dwelling-place of all impiety, the worthy lodging of a defiled and incestuous body? There the wicked,

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infamous robber is buried, though he is worthier to feed the bellies of wolves and crows. And that butcher rests in the midst of his own people in the greatest love and most undeserved respect, while the tomb of Christ, alas the sorrow! is held without reverence by the enemy and is approached only rarely and stealthily by the faithful, not without serious danger and the dishonorable payment of tribute. Moreover, what wonder is it that the creator of a wicked superstition should hate the gracious city that is hostile to his acts and sprinkled with sacred blood of martyrs, and is the most eminent stronghold of religion and faith, fearing it particularly as the place whence in all likelihood should come destruction to his own poisonous teaching, and recalling at the same time all the ruin and heavy mischances that had fallen from that quarter at different times on the Persians, Medes, Egyptians, Chaldeans, and his Arab forefathers? The hatred inspired in him by fear and distress is almost reasonable. I rather wonder that the wildernesses of the Nile did not move him to hatred, where he had heard of so many miracles and so many virtuous deeds performed by the Anthonys and the Macarii through the sole name of Christ. Indeed I have no doubt that he did hate them, being an accomplished voluptuary and an instigator of every obscene lust. What does puzzle the mind is the reason of his love for Jerusalem and hatred of Antioch. But I am inclined to surmise that he remembered the first as the city in which his adversary Christ—clearly an adversary, though perhaps he did not dare to abuse him openly because of the majesty and glory of his name—had endured so many indignities, so many lashes, so cruel a death, and he was glad to love it as the place which shared his hatred and envy of Christ, even though the love which Christ's death instilled into his savage breast ought to have been extinguished by the glorious resurrection. But that the unreasonable and impious fellow, blind with the lust of rule, failed to see. He hated Antioch, on the other hand, because there the designation of Christianity first arose,

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as is shown in the Acts of the Apostles, and there the Apostle Peter, the friend of Christ and the leader and standard-bearer of the Christian band, ascended the first pontifical chair. It would seem then that one city disturbed him in that it approved Christ and the name of Christ, the other in that it supported the name and the vicar of Christ with renowned reverence. No place was more hateful to him, I suppose, than Bethlehem. Yet he does not mention its name, being cunning with a native shrewdness of wit, though perhaps untaught, in order not to appear to betray too openly the reasons for his hatred. Thus much I may be allowed to offer as a diversion not unpleasant to myself and agreeable, I imagine, to the reader.

Chapter 7. The denunciation of Catholic princes, because they neglect the special concern of their country

IT IS time to return to the point of our departure. Goaded by the sting of sorrow, I have with a glowing and flaming point impressed this indelible mark of infamy, which was all I could do, upon our peoples and princes who have involved themselves in so many useless, nay mischievous and impious concerns, and neglect this honorable and particularly obligatory duty to our home—I mean to our eternal home, Jerusalem, not the one here on earth but that of our mother which is situated in heaven on high, from which we are now exiled. The former bears but the image of the latter, and if it is estimated with reference to itself, it is not our country and merits the fate it has suffered, and is deserving of intenser hatred, since with sacrilegious daring and wicked unanimity it crucified its God who had come down to serve it in a lowly garb, though from the cloud of his flesh he shone with the splendor of many and great miracles. But that impiety, though destructive to herself, may

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be of advantage to the world, since by placing him on the cross it revealed him to the peoples for worship as though from a greater elevation.

Chapter 8. That we are not obliged to fight for every country, and what country deserves to be fought for

NOT for any country are all things to be dared, though those who have dared are exalted to the skies with many commendations. Among our own patriots who have shed their blood for their country, praise is given to Brutus and Mutius and Curtius and the Decii, the Fabii, and the Cornelii. Foreigners also meet with praise, for a like virtue deserves a commendation not unlike. Codrus and Themistocles are praised by Athens, Leonidas by Sparta, Epaminondas by Thebes, the brothers Philenus by Carthage, and other citizens by other states. If you ask my opinion about all of these, it is that our love should be for the celestial state, which is not disturbed by the agitations of tribunes, the uprisings of the populace, the arrogance of the senate, the envy of factions, or foreign and domestic wars; whoever sheds his blood for it is a good citizen and certain of his reward. Not that I think one's earthly country should on that account be forsaken, for which, if the situation requires it, we are even commanded to fight, yet only provided it is ruled by justice and lives under equitable laws, as was once the case with the Roman republic, according to the writings of Sallust, Livy, and many besides. Cicero in particular argues this point acutely and eloquently in his book on the Republic. I might easily agree with the writers who maintain that Rome was just even when it imposed force upon the whole world and seemed to be most violent, on the ground that it was to the advantage of those very peoples who were coerced to be coerced, and that it might be

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salutary, though harsh to the taste, for the world to have a single head for its affairs, especially when it was a head of such supreme excellence. But there is this serious objection to such a view, namely, that while they maintained justice between men by means of those Roman arts described by the poet, assigning to each one his due, engrafting the laws of peace, forbearing the conquered, and warring down the proud,[2] and although, as Cicero notably remarks elsewhere, "As long as the empire of the Roman people maintained itself by acts of service, not of oppression, wars were waged in the interest of our allies or to safeguard our supremacy; the end of our wars was marked by acts of clemency or by only a necessary degree of severity; the senate was a haven of refuge for kings, tribes, and nations; and the highest ambition of our magistrates and generals was to defend our provinces and allies with justice and honor,"[3] and though it might be very true that "this could be called more accurately a protectorate of the world than a dominion"[3]—although, I say, I might admit that the conduct of the Romans of that time was actuated by perfect justice and good will as regards men, yet toward God there can be no doubt they were unjust, for they deprived him of something not insignificant, namely of themselves, in the manner of fugitive slaves making theft of themselves from their master, and, what is the most serious form of theft, offering to his enemies the worship due to him, which is doubtless a much greater injustice than if some ancestral estate or property were seized from a neighbor.

This passage is examined and curiously discussed by Augustine in his book on the celestial republic. Suppose indeed, a man should be born into a country corrupted with wicked manners, as are nearly all that you now see, should he be commended for having shed his blood for such a state? By no means. If at the risk of life a man sought to obtain for wicked and dishonest citizens impunity for their crimes, would you say he was deserving of praise and commemoration (though

[2] *Æneid*, vi, 852-853.
[3] *De Officiis*, Bk. ii, Ch. 8.

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this has indeed happened to many of whom we read), would you say that his life was glorious? I call him wasteful of life and doubly dead, since he has thrown away at once his body and his soul, at once his temporal and eternal life. On the other hand, not to wander too far, if there is any piety or justice in us, what would it not be reasonable to dare and to do in behalf of the heavenly Jerusalem, in behalf of that eternal country which assures us of a blessed dwelling-place, without end, without toil, without trouble, without fear, without any vexation, in which there dwells nothing disgraceful, nothing impious, nothing unjust?

Truly, I have now journeyed as far from my beginning as Peter did from his home. The encounter of a single solitary old man gave me this courage to rebuke the princes and peoples of the West with our reproach in relation to the East. Would that my right hand were as effective in this as was Peter's tongue! That this wish is vain I am not at all sure; I rather fear lest I should be thought to have spoken with too much insistence and boldness by those who regard freedom of mind as recklessness, truth as madness, and every exhortation as an insult. But however the matter may be received, being now by these words and this digression eased of the heavy and annoying load of my grievances, I return to the path of the original narrative with greater alacrity.

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THE FIFTH TRACTATE

Returning to other more exalted examples of solitary life

Chapter 1. Of the solitude of the most holy John the Baptist and of the blessed Mary Magdalen who is on that account preferred to her sister

WHY should I any longer loiter among lesser figures? The greatest among those born of woman, John, holy in the womb, whom Christ, when he was about to visit earth, sent before him from heaven's height as a king sends a messenger, as a judge a crier, as the day sends dawn and the sun Lucifer, did not think himself safe until he went into the caves of a desert, though of a tender age. Mary did likewise after sinning. She did not choose to be seen long among people or to reside in palaces, but escaping from her country and being conveyed to these regions as into a new world, she remained in constant hiding to the end, and had for her home that base and hollow rock which I think you have seen. It is not far distant from here and the place is hallowed, venerable with a kind of religious awe, and not unworthy to be visited even from great distances. I remember having been there often myself and once spending three nights and as many days, with quite a different satisfaction from what one is accustomed to take in cities. There the sweet and blessed hostess of Christ, living and dying, did not use the service of tiring-maids, but the ministrations of gracious angels. But, some will object, her sister Martha did no such thing and yet she is a saint. I do not deny it, but surely Mary, who did it, is much holier. Rightly there-

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fore is she praised by that supreme and infallible judge for choosing the better part. If it is true, as the learned declare, that in addition to its literal truth the story of the two sisters cloaks the mystery of the two kinds of life, then there is no room left for doubting that the contemplative life was placed before the active by the judgment of Christ and should be especially preferred by Christ's faithful in making a choice.

Chapter 2. The solitude of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior

WHO therefore shall wonder that a sinner, being besieged by so many enemies, should flee eagerly to a safe concealment when he is conscious of his own weakness and encouraged by so many examples, not only human but divine? Though all the cases are powerful, there is one that is irresistible. The Savior himself, the source of all salutary examples, though he was not in need of solitude or fearful of numbers, desiring to furnish forth his teaching with illustrations, went up to the mountain to pray, and prayed alone. In a wilderness he fasted and in a wilderness he overcame the temptation of the enemy, though later of his own will he was destined to be slain by his enemies in the midst of a crowd. Twice in the wilderness with a scant repast,—a few loaves and fewer fishes,—he fed the countless famished horde not only with wondrous satisfaction of their appetites but with a prodigious quantity of fragments remaining. To the wilderness as a place of consolation and peace he betook himself when he heard of the death of John. Moreover he taught multitudes in the open fields. On a lofty mountain where the voice of the eternal Father thundered over him he was transfigured. On the mountain he passed the night in prayer and again ascended it to pray and to die, not being satisfied till he had turned away from his followers

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to seek for his last prayer a spot more and more lonely, teaching by the act that we too should seek solitude in our extremity. Again, spurning the weight of the offered kingdom, he fled alone to the mountain; in the wilderness also he turned aside the danger of death, for which the time was not yet ripe, so that we might be taught to escape into the wilderness from the enticements and menaces of fortune and to despise them from a higher plane. If these things are all true, if they are known by the evidence of the Gospels, shall we, Christian men, so far hesitate in our opinion of solitude when we know that this was the attitude of our Master and Leader and Lord, that his forerunner, as we said, spent his life in the wilderness from the very outset, that his friends in such numbers had chosen the same kind of life before and chose it afterward, that his virgin mother finally, when she was heavy with God, proceeded without delay to the mountainous country, carrying the most blessed burden of her sacred womb into the solitude before he should be born? None of the faithful would hesitate to believe that the Holy Ghost was her guide in this journey.

Chapter 3. Praising the solitary life by way of epilogue to what has been said

BY SUCH instances as these and whatever others of the kind there may be (for to include all was neither necessary nor with so little paper possible), does the praise of solitude appear great and serve as a spur and example to imitation. Surely, whoever hears these things, if he has similar aspirations, will act in like manner, nor will he be carried to the single goal by any other route, especially when there is none straighter or more convenient. Doubtless, being remote from the populace in our purpose and point of view, it ought hardly

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to appear incongruous if we are as much separated from them by the remoteness or unlikeness of our situation as by our pursuits. Different habits and distinct dwelling-places are proper to different minds. The confusion of opposites is generally unhappy. We should love solitude and admit it to familiarity, and that not only for honesty's sake but for safety. For as luxury is a rare thing in the woods, so is modesty utterly rare in cities. What place can there be for reason and virtue where the power is controlled by evil examples and evil counsels, where everything is determined by false views, sway is given over to custom, and error is prescribed as something pleasant and seemly, where no one asks what is actually true but what is usually done or what the majority thinks, than which there is no test more misleading. Believe me, therefore, whoever you are that pursue virtue or fly from vice, lingering among people is dangerous for you if you are to hold on to the former and not be held by the latter. For what shall you see there save strife, adultery, fraud, injustice, theft, rapine, and murder? These are the arts that will greet you on the very threshold of the city, these shapes of things will fly about your head, these examples will clamor about your ears. Though you were at first quite unlike all the others whom you shall find, it will be very hard not to become as they.

Chapter 4. Of King David and certain patriarchs who loved the solitary life

LEST by chance you should now be flattered by a better hope, thinking to hear or see things of another nature or to stand with firmer footing among the slippery places, learn from the example of a more innocent age and a greater man what you may expect. David surely was a king both holy and wise and a prophet, and yet when weighed down with sorrows and afflictions,

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overwhelmed with the terror of death and with fear and trembling, overcast with shadows, what else did he see in the city but violence and strife, to use his own words, iniquity upon its walls, sorrow and wickedness in the midst of it, deceit and guile not departing from her streets.[1] Therefore, though himself the ruler and servant of such great peoples, he fled to a distance for his own safety and remained in the wilderness awaiting the Lord, who saved him from the tempest of his mind. For he remembered that it was in the wilderness that the kingdom had been offered to him by God and that he had been placed not only over his brothers in the city, who were older, but over the king of Israel, who was on the throne by divine will. This same king, who implacably persecuted him, had twice been delivered into his hands in the wilderness and in caves, and twice he had allowed him to escape with such clear tokens of his innocence that when he displayed from afar the skirt of the king's robe and his spear, he constrained his spirit to tears, and, fierce though it was, subdued it by the sense of the benefit. And he pondered thereupon that whereas in the solitude he had twice triumphed over his great enemy and twice been victorious over his own spirit, than which there is no victory more splendid, in Jerusalem on the other hand he had been overcome by lust and had combined mean deception and cruel manslaughter with disgraceful adultery, a crime unworthy the majesty of a king. Reflecting on his own lot in the city, he compared it with the solitude of Isaac, considering how the latter, having gone forth to meditate in the fields at the close of day, met with a happy and chaste spouse, as he was strolling along the road, while himself, promenading voluptuously after his midday relaxation on the roof of the royal palace, had been visited with the impious and arrogant desire of defiling another man's wedlock,—an occasion of misery and penitence to himself. He was right therefore to run away from the dangerous and ill-omened city and to hasten to safety and happiness in solitude. But if we understand it, as some would have it, to be spoken of

[1] *Psalms*, liv, 10-11.

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Christ, it becomes an even stronger argument in support of our contention, inasmuch as Christ is greater not only than David but than all persons whatsoever.

Not without reason indeed, to attach the end of this discourse to the beginning, may we suppose that it was written about Abraham himself that the Lord "brought him forth abroad and said, Look now towards heaven,"[2] for in my judgment whoever wishes to look up toward heaven and meditate heavenly things, should be brought forth abroad, because in cities the mortal gaze is dulled and obscured by the interposition of many evil objects. And so, I say, he should be brought forth abroad, but brought forth by the Lord, otherwise he is nowhere safe, for our sins follow us into the deserts and cross the high seas with us. That is why some, following not God but their own impressions as their guide, have come to grief in the wilderness. I am not unaware that Lot was a just man in Sodom and sinned on the mountain. Though he did not know what he was doing, as Jerome says, and though there was no element of deliberation in his offence, yet there was a fault involved in his sin. However just and upright he may have been in other respects, there is yet this one particular in which he cannot be excused, that he suffered himself to be so overcome by wine as to leave an opening even in ignorance for a shameful act which he would have shuddered to think of in his conscious and sober state. He went up to the mountain, one may say, with his left foot, and would have done better perhaps to stay in Zoar, which was the place he had chosen of his own accord as a home suited to his weakness. But truly it is too clear and evident a matter to require such a host of examples, that those who aspire to heaven do not yearn for the clamorous assemblage of cities but for silent and tranquil solitudes, where God is constantly over their heads and the world and human affairs beneath their feet.

[2] *Gen.* xv, 5.

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THE SIXTH TRACTATE

Examples of men outside of the Christian religion who have pursued the life of solitude

Chapter 1. Of the life, customs, and rites of the Brahmans and the solitude of the famous Calanus

IT IS time I made an end; the intended limit of my work is exceeded and I am summoned by other tasks, while you have been already too much distracted by this discourse from attention to a greater duty. But I am unable to restrain myself from touching on a number of examples drawn from another class of men who ingeniously contrive the substance for a rarer fame. I shall be silent about the Gymnosophists, who, it is reported, are accustomed to philosophize while wandering about naked, (which is precisely what their name denotes), through the remote, shady wildernesses of India. I shall pass over the Brahmans, about whom some persons show a book inscribed with Ambrose's name. They live in the extreme East on the other side of the Ganges in a most healthful climate and an isolated region which, as far as I can ascertain by conjecture, is not far distant from the place where the earthly paradise is believed to be, and they, too, wander naked through the woods. I should have said that they did not differ from the Gymnosophists either in principle or customs, or in anything save perhaps in situation and name, if it were not that Bardesanes, a Babylonian, and therefore worthy of credit, at least from his nearness to those parts, divided the Gymnosophists among the Hindoos into two schools, one of which he calls Brahmans and the other Samarians.[1] Jerome, writing

[1] *Samaneans* in Jerome.

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against Jovinian,[2] makes mention of this, so that it appears that Gymnosophist is a generic name and Brahman a specific one, although I am not unaware that quite a different conclusion might be reached from what the same Jerome recounts in his preface to the holy scriptures. But lest this trifling difficulty should interfere with my undertaking, let me drive past it and follow rather the line I have begun.

There is, then, a tribe of Brahmans, as they say, distinguished by continence and purity and by contempt of riches, and greatly to be respected for their severe silence, in the midst of which the chief delight of their ears is not, as with many, in old wives' tales. Nor is this silence violated for them by the roaring of men or instrumental music, but their whole desire is for the song of birds and the sound of hymns, which is the only exercise they have for their tongues. Their entire hope is fixed on life in a future world. Their food consists of herbs and wild berries, their clothes, if they have any, are made of leaves, their house of branches, their beds of flowers. They drink water from the springs. The well-known Calanus, who is reputed to have written a letter to Alexander of Macedon, was a member of this sect. When, according to the custom of his people, he was going voluntarily to his own death and the pile of wood was already kindled, he playfully predicted the impending death of Alexander. Both the Greek writers and ours make mention of this. But though famous among us, he is held infamous among his own people, because, deserting as it were the severer discipline of his native morality, he took refuge in the wordy philosophy of Greece and in luxurious delicacy. For this he is attacked severely on all sides, but more severe than all is the invective of the naked old sage, Dandamus, his contemporary, who was not himself tainted with foreign customs or far-fetched doctrines. I find among the writings of others a letter of his also—I don't know whether it is more spirited than wordy—ad-

[2]Bk. ii, Ch. 14.

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dressed to the same king. As for the letter of Calanus of which I have spoken, lest there be any doubt concerning it, Ambrose has placed it among his own letters, but of the other it is not a letter that survives but a conversation with the king himself, quite long, and free on both sides, in the book about the life of the Brahmans which I have referred to above as inscribed with Ambrose's name. It does not fully savor to me of the style of Ambrose, yet it appears in the midst of his writings in a huge, venerable, and antique volume of his library which is guarded in the archives of the Ambrosian church in Milan. As far indeed as I can conjecture, on no random suspicions, the book is the work of Palladius rather than Ambrose. But whoever the author may be, his account is surely one which it should not be unpleasant to hear. He reports that the king sent him presents of gold, silver, clothing, food, and oil, and that the philosopher disdained all but the last, because the gold and silver, he said, was so lacking in value that far from captivating the mind of a man, it even lacked the power to draw a sweeter song from any of the birds that were flying about. The clothes he not only rejected as superfluous but shrank from them as a hindrance to freedom and a bondage; at the food he mocked as though it were the remains of a fire. But in order not to seem disdainful of all the king's gifts, he reports that he took the oil, and lighting immediately a great pile of wood, he poured it over the fire, and when the brilliant flame burst forth he offered thanks to almighty God, very briefly as always, as though this were a kind of sacrifice to him. But enough now of this solitary old man.

What should be my general judgment on him and on all the usages of those people, I do not know. For I do not like the habit of going naked, however great the gentleness of the elements, since the respectability of a modest garment is ordained for decency as well as protection against cold; however, it is written that though otherwise naked they were in the habit of covering their loins. I do not like

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their inhuman disregard of food and sleep, for in avoiding the extreme of the solicitous life we may well lapse into the opposite extreme. What I like, in this regard as in most, is the Ciceronian moderation: "We must besides present an appearance of neatness—not too punctilious or exquisite, but just enough to avoid boorish or ill-bred slovenliness."[3] The same principle is to be observed in regard to dress, in which, as in things generally, the middle way is the best. This, I repeat, is the manner of life that I like. Let your sleep be short, your food light, your drink simple, your garment plain, but there should be some difference in dress and bed and food between men and cattle. I do not ask for the spoiling of rich houses nor golden ruins, I do not ask for tables loaded with chased silver and steaming dishes; I am not so forgetful of myself. But in all things I ask for measure. I do not object to reclining occasionally or taking a nap on the ground, lest I should seem to reprove my friend who says in his Epistles,

Sup lightly, sleep on grassy river-banks.[4]

But to spend one's whole life in the open air I judge to be more proper for bears than for men, although the poet glories in having the sky for his roof and the whole earth for his couch. But I fear you will say that these observations are too frivolous to be brought into a comparison with serious matters.

Their perverse custom of anticipating death is a mark of unsoundness, in that they claim the right whenever they wish of abandoning the post of their body without the command of God, as though their life came only from themselves. This is condemned alike by Christian faith and by the most celebrated of the philosophers. Moreover it is a sign of grievous arrogance that they declare themselves to be without sin, thereby deluding themselves and charging with falsehood the Holy Ghost which through the mouth of John the Apostle beat down this

[3] *De Officiis*, Bk. i, Ch. 36.
[4] Horace, *Epistles*, i, xiv, 35 (Hovenden's translation).

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insolence, inviting us to confession and repentance. These are the things which offend me in the sect; that old man who with such great freedom resisted Alexander to his face would, if he were here, doubtless make a magnificent reply to me also in behalf of his heresy.

On the other hand, however, I like their contempt of the world, which cannot be too great in a right-minded man; I like their solitude, I like their freedom, which no people enjoys to an equal degree; I like their silence, I like their leisure, I like their repose, I like their habit of fixed contemplation, I like their self-possession and assurance, provided it be not reckless; I like the even temper of their minds, their undisturbed brow, their fearing nothing and desiring nothing; I like their choice of a habitation in the woods near a stream, which, as appears from that book, they were accustomed to drink pure and undefiled, as though it were the breast of mother earth. I am affected, too, I confess, by the grave conversation of the Brahmans in general, but particularly by that colloquy of Dandamus with Alexander, which I mentioned a while ago, in which not Alexander alone but practically the entire human race is upbraided with a mass of innumerable crimes—the insatiable thirst for gold, inhuman savagery, universal hate and contempt of God, puerile admiration of riches and effeminate adornment of men, swelling of the mind, trembling before death, inconsiderate appetite for glory; add to these a slippery tongue, empty chatter which is often harmful even to the speaker, a philosophy which is all in words, an understanding which is in the lips, conversation which is contrary to life, heedlessness in action which is close neighbor to repentance, an unlimited craving of material objects induced by avarice, strife among the feelings within and a great conflict of the members without, much perversity of morals, and above all, the love of slaughter and passion for war; besides, excess in our domestic life, deep drinking and gluttony which is enemy to itself and the ruin of the body it feeds, the absurd quest for all kinds of food, and partic-

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ularly the eating of meat, in which he very bitingly says we are not like oxen or horses or deer but like wolves and lions, and with even more burning reproach calls us living sepulchres of dead bodies. Into this digression I have led you not unwillingly, O father, dear to my spirit, for though you have heard that I do not approve all the practices of Brahmans, yet I do approve their solitude and solitary life, and in writing on this subject I did not feel that I could pass over those who, I had heard, were accustomed to glory remarkably in this life above all other men. But I depart from here as from a suspected region, lest by dwelling too long on such distant matters I should by chance mix up falsehoods with the truth.

Chapter 2. Of a certain solitary among Hindoos

EVEN now, as I am writing this, there are found some among us, than whom no nation is more curious in exploring the earth, who assert that there is a man among the Hindoos of this character, of amazing purity and learning, whom the people and the kings of India approach with something more than humility and supplication, to see him and to beg of him intercession with God and answers to their doubts and advice on the conduct of life, and whom they venerate in all ways with almost divine honors, while he, aged, naked, reclining on the ground and not rising even before kings, makes brief reply with scarcely a movement of his lips. His utterances are received as oracles and act as a great comfort in every misfortune and as a refreshment after the longest journeys. Kings themselves, it is said, (and this agrees well enough with what we read of Alexander's conduct) when they come to the wood in which he lives, are accustomed to dismount from their horses and take off their purple robe and put down their crowns and rings and amulets and sceptres and, after sending away their

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minions, to approach him alone or with a very few chosen men, not without a certain awe, and to prostrate themselves at his feet and to regard it as a cause of eternal glory if they are honored even once with his conversation. I might suspect this as quite fabulous if it were not that Bardesanes, whom I mentioned shortly before, and after him Jerome, said something not out of keeping with it, though more briefly expressed, namely that there were men there whom the king was accustomed to worship when he came to them, believing that in their prayers lay the peace of the country. If there were in the past numbers of such men, what prevents the existence of one today? Many more things might be said of them but they are too long to go into.

Chapter 3. Of the solitaries beyond the North and the Rhipæan Mountains and the Hyperborean race and the remaining islands

BUT inasmuch as it seems worth while in speaking of the individual friends of solitude to touch also upon nations of solitaries, so to speak, I shall recount a rumor of a Hyperborean race in a far different region of the world, beyond the North and the Rhipæan Mountains, where, because of a necessary principle of the heavens, they say the whole year consists of a single day and a single night, each lasting six months. These Hyperboreans are said to have almost the same habits as the men of India, except that on account of the more inclement sky I do not believe in their going naked. But they have the same obnoxious practice of voluntary death, though the manner of dying is different. For while the Hindoos enter the flames, these people, when they are invaded not by weariness but the satiety of life and the desire of death, adorn themselves with wreaths and go

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forth as to a joyful and festive ceremony and hurl themselves from a steep rock into the nearby waves of the ocean. Such an ending to life is with them most glorious, such a burial distinguished. In other respects, however, the race is the purest and most upright among mortals and enjoys a long and happy life, being innocent of wars and unacquainted with strife, always enjoying peaceful leisure and living amid groves and solitudes. Pomponius Mela in his books of Cosmography and many others have made mention of this people. Plinius Secundus and Solinus, who are very curious investigators of such matters, refer also to a people living near them and greatly resembling them whom they call Arimphæans. Their dwellings are in the woods and they subsist on berries. They are described as a serious and gentle race. They live where the peaks of the Rhipæan Mountains terminate and are considered a holy people; their influence is so great that in the midst of so many savage nations they are not only themselves safe and inviolate, but whoever takes refuge with them enjoys sanctuary as though in a temple. Among them hair is thought improper and both sexes shave.

Turning from here to the West, I pass over the philosophers of the Gauls, of whom frequent mention is found among writers. The Druids, they say, are accustomed in caves and distant ravines to instruct the noblest men of the nation in wisdom and eloquence and natural science and the motions of the stars and the mysteries of the gods and the immortality of the soul and the state of the future life. I pass over Thule and Hibernia. The former, though it is far famed through a variety of writers, is actually unknown, but the latter is very well known. I have learned that its people despise riches and the objects of civilization and moreover neglect the tilling of the soil but live in pastures and woods. Leisure is their luxury and freedom their greatest wealth. I should call them a happy people if I were not restrained by a certain ill repute, which may not be well founded, imputing viciousness to their character.

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I pass over the Fortunate Isles which, being situated at the extreme west, are nearer and better known to us, but are as remote as possible from India and the North,—a land famed through the writings of many men but chiefly through the lyric song of Horace, and whose repute is both very old and quite fresh. For within the memory of our fathers the warships of the Genoese penetrated to them, and recently Clement VI gave a prince to that country, a man of noble stock mixed of the royal blood of Spain and France, whom I once saw. You remember how, on the day when he went out to display himself in the city with crown and sceptre, a great rain suddenly poured out of the sky and he returned home so completely drenched that it was interpreted as an omen that the sovereignty of a truly rainy and watery country had been imposed upon him. How he succeeded in that dominion situated outside of the world I have not learned, but I do know that many things are written and reported in view of which its fortune does not appear fully to square with the designation of the Fortunate lands. For the rest, its people enjoy solitude beyond nearly all other men, but are without refinement in their habits and so little unlike brute beasts that their action is more the outcome of natural instinct than of rational choice, and you might say that they did not so much lead the solitary life as roam about in solitudes either with wild beasts or with their flocks. But I have wandered enough in this curious quest through the widely separated corners of the earth. The responsibility for the truth of all these matters rests with the original authors and not with me, who only report what I have read or heard. But having now run over them, I shall proceed to more illustrious and more familiar examples.

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THE SEVENTH TRACTATE

Examples of philosophers and poets who liked the solitary life

Chapter 1. Of what philosophers and poets the author wishes to speak with mention of famous philosophers who took refuge in solitude

WHAT of philosophers and poets? When I speak of philosophers I do not refer to those who were fittingly named by the man who first dubbed them "professors," for they are philosophers only in their profession, in their actions they are foolish; they teach others but are the first to act in opposition to their own teaching, the first to disregard the laws themselves have handed down; proclaiming themselves the standard-bearers, they are the first to desert the ranks and to rebel against the commands of virtue. I therefore do not mean these, but those true men who are always few and at this time scarcely to be found at all, who give evidence of their love and devotion to the wisdom which they profess. And by poets I understand not such as are content with the spinning of "verses void of substance and sonorous trifles,"[1] as Horace describes them, with whom we are replete to the point of disgust, but those who, if we may trust Cicero, were ever more rare than philosophers themselves, true poets I mean, and using Horace's language once more, those who have genius, "a soul of heaven's own fire, words that grandly roll,"[2] to whom the honor of this name is deservedly assigned. Would not

[1] *Ars Poetica*, 322.
[2] *Sat.* i, 4, 43-4 (Conington's translation).

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philosophers and poets of this kind, of whom I am not able to point out a single one but might imagine many as existing in our own age or destined to exist in later ages, would not these, I say, shun the cities and run after solitude? It is known to be the case with the philosophers of the past. Question Plato, and I think he will prefer his Academy to the greatly admired Athens. Question Plotinus, whom Macrobius calls with Plato the chief of the teachers of philosophy, and he will answer that with the whole world before him he chose leisure in Campania. Though his end was unfortunate, his choice was glorious. Inquire of Pythagoras and he will tell you that he sought out not only agreeable seclusion but even vast and frightful wildernesses, and often went on toilsome journeys in deserted regions in his zeal for investigating the truth. It is certain, too, on the evidence of Jerome that the Pythagoreans who inherited his name and teachings shrank from an intercourse which exposed them to the agitations of the pleasures and were accustomed to live in lonely and deserted places. Ask Democritus and he will admit that he tore out his eyes in order to see the truth and avoid seeing the mob, which is the enemy of truth. Examine Parmenides and Atlas and you will find that they left their names in the mountains which they inhabited. And if the truth of the matter is looked into, Prometheus too will not deny that the occasion of the fable in which he is bound to a peak in the Caucasus and exposed to the gnawings of an insatiable vulture was that he had taken possession of the solitude of that mountain and applied himself with the greatest concentration of mind to penetrating the inner mystery of things, which is surely exhausting to the mind of the student.

The place often provides a spur to the intellect and therefore it is to be wished that it were conveniently free and adaptable to those who must apply their mind to lofty things, seeing that the numberless forms of vanity which prevail where people are assembled serve to lower

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the mind's tone and to dissipate it, and death which is bound to come in finds a thousand ways through the windows. Impelled by these reasons, many of the philosophers, as I read in Jerome, not only forsook the haunts of cities as the chief seats of restlessness and trouble, but even their little suburban gardens, which were rendered suspect, most likely, by an excessive development of luxury and close proximity to riotous cities. Therefore many considerations lead me to believe that in the case of Socrates and Aristotle and some others there were accidental circumstances which always stood in the way of their desire for solitude, whether it was the authority of their royal disciples or the commands and requirements of the state.

To these examples of antiquity I shall add a later one not very far removed from our own age, that of the famous Peter Abélard, a man whose orthodoxy is by some, I know not with what justice, suspected, but whose genius was surely not slight. In the long account which he gives in the *History of his Calamities* he records how, yielding to the envious, he penetrated the hidden solitude of Troyes. Even there, however, he was not free from the immense concourse of students from all parts whom the great fame of his teaching had assembled from many cities to sit under him in his solitude, but had to live without the longed-for peace which inveterate and persistent hatred and malice had deprived him of. From this point we must return to antiquity and to another form of intellectual activity whereby the argument we are aiming at may be confirmed.

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Chapter 2. Of the ancient poets who chose solitude, with the reprehensible exception of Ovid, and of those whom he imitated or who imitated him

WHAT shall I say of Homer, who is the father of poets, since of his forerunners like Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus, whether we regard them as poets or musicians or, as some would have it, both poets and musicians because of the kinship of the two arts, only the bare names have come down to us? Homer has so well described the lonely places not only of Greece but of Italy, that what, according to Cicero, he did not himself see (for tradition makes him blind) he has made visible to us, so that we behold the painting, as it were, of his genius and not the poetry. But shall we believe that he would have been able to do this if he had not before growing blind carefully observed those places and faithfully retained their memory? And what shall I say of our Virgil, who ran away from Rome, where he was basking in the admiration paid to his genius and in the friendship of the prince who ruled the world, and while seeking the freedom of loneliness encountered on the way a premature death which rescued him from all such cares? In his own judgment he had need of the assistance of solitude in order that his divine poem might be perfected. Death envied the genius of the Latin tongue and was intent on doing it greater injury but was hindered by the piety of a prince distinguished for his mildness and devotion to literature.

Horace openly avows that it is not royal Rome that he likes but quiet Tibur and unwarlike Tarentum, and he means by these words nothing else than solitude and peace, having made trial in Rome of the opposite of both. So earnestly does he enumerate the annoyance arising in that city from the great assemblage of people that you may easily see his feelings are speaking. The last of his

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Epistles is written to Florus, whom he asks more than once, in order to express himself as explicitly as possible on a clear point,

> Think too of Rome: can I write verses here,
> Where there's so much to tease and interfere?[3]

Then, after inserting an elegant account of these vexations, he concludes ironically

> Go now; abstract yourself from outer things,
> And hearken what the inner spirit sings.[4]

But this not being enough, he asks again

> And how should I, with noises all about,
> Tread where they tread, and make their
> footprints out?[5]

Nor is he satisfied till he once more puts the question

> Here, in this roaring, tossing, weltering sea,
> To tune sweet lyrics, is that work for me?[6]

And lest you suppose that he is content with angry questioning and ironic observations and says nothing distinctly about people, he gives a rule which is short but of the broadest application, to the effect that

> Bards fly from town and haunt the woods
> and glades.[7]

Imitating him and likewise restricting the meaning to poets, I have remarked in a certain epistle,

> The forest is dear to the muses, the city is
> an enemy to poets.[8]

The same Horace, whether captivated by the weather of the Gulf of Baiæ, or loading with many praises his woods and his little field inhabited by five families,[9] or sighing

[3] *Epistles*, ii, 2, 65-66 (Conington's translation).
[4] *Ibid.*, 76.
[5] *Ibid.*, 79-80.
[6] *Ibid.*, 84-86.
[7] *Ibid.*, 77.
[8] Petrarch's *Poetic Epistles*, Bk. ii, Epistle 3 (Bernardo Ruthenensi S. R. E. Cardinali).
[9] *Epistles*, i, xiv.

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in the midst of oppressive and hateful business for the aspect of his favorite farm, infallibly condemns and scorns residence in the city. On this subject he disputes with his friend and likewise with his steward and slave, so that taking everything together no one can doubt what his feeling was. In one of his satires, referring to his domestic leisure, he says

> Here you see
> A careless life, from stir and striving free.[10]

How greatly he valued it, he has expressed in his *Epistles* where he says,

> Give me a country life and leave me free,
> I would not choose the wealth of Araby.[11]

He praises solitude, therefore, and prefers leisure to great wealth, and so it is that the works of his leisure remain and the place preserves the memory of his solitude. It is still called Horace's Field, and after having changed so many owners keeps the name of its more famous master to this day.

Among poets I believe I shall scarcely be able to find any one to oppose him, since to no class of men has solitude been so needful and so friendly, except it be Ovid alone, or perhaps those who imitate him or whom he imitated. He strikes me indeed as having been a man of great genius but of a lascivious, unsteady, and extremely effeminate temper, who found pleasure in the company of women to such an extent that he placed in them the sum and apex of his happiness. Writing his *Ars Amatoria*, an unwholesome work and in my opinion justifiably the cause of his exile, he not only teaches that the city of Rome, as being very fruitful in matrons and maidens, should be sought by those who to the natural excitement of that madness add the provocation of a certain art, but he also distinguishes the places and the holidays with a view to providing more abundant material for passion. I shall be silent about that disgraceful wish, which it is

[10] *Sat.* i, 6, 129.
[11] *Epistles*, i, 7, 36.

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even indecent to recount, though it comes from the mouth of a desperate and abandoned man, which he was not even ashamed of setting forth in writing for the knowlege of all ages, defining the happy man as one relaxed in the act of venery; he even dares to praise death in that state in which life is most disgraceful and useless, and desires of the gods that this might be the cause of his own extinction. To be sure, as he himself says, it would be appropriate to him and to his life, but in itself it is the most wretched form of death and worse without a doubt than death itself. If he had not been of such morals and such a mind, he would have had a brighter reputation with serious men and he would not have come to his exile in Pontus and the solitudes of the Ister, or he would have borne it with greater composure. But I pass over to the example of a firmer intellect.

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THE EIGHTH TRACTATE

Examples of orators who loved solitude

Chapter 1. The solitude of Seneca, a citizen of Cordova and a Roman senator.

SENECA of Cordova, when already a Roman citizen and a senator and more famous in Rome than was compatible with regard for safety and assurance of concealment, in a certain tragedy recalls his solitude in Corsica with no little tenderness of mind, and with reason puts the humiliation of his leisured exile above the glory of his active life of that time. Read the passage and you will understand from his comparison of the opposite conditions which of them you should regard as preferable. Moreover, what his opinion was is sufficiently indicated by that advice which he gave to Lucilius, which I mentioned formerly. But in that view he is so harsh that even I, who have always liked solitude, do not like his counsel of solitude. And though the last end of this man does not admit of any doubt in the matter, though it is clear that in the deserted solitude he enjoyed entire freedom and undisturbed study of philosophy, while in the royal city not even his life was safe from the relentlessness of men, yet there is something quite amazing in the fact that in a passage of his tragedy he should so far in advance have foreseen and put into writing his fall and grievous ruin.

Chapter 2. The solitude of Cicero

I AM aware of only Cicero in this class of persons who did not bear loneliness with sufficient equanimity, and this, I believe, was because he not so much hated the thing itself as the ruin of law and justice which was the

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occasion of it. That is what is suggested by the tenor of his own complaints. Moreover, in addition to being a student of philosophy he was the greatest of orators, and when one seeks, as he unaffectedly did, to acquire glory in this special branch of literature, one naturally cannot meet with it save amidst populous cities. That is why, when he had to defend King Deiotarus before Julius Cæsar, he complained at the case being conducted in a private chamber and not in the presence of the Roman people. It is peculiar and appropriate in the case of orators that in proportion to the greatness of their own powers they should take satisfaction in great cities and crowded assemblies, that they should feel a loathing for lonely places and a distaste and hatred for silent tribunals. And therefore, just as the lesser men each had a great desire for his own city, so did Cicero for the city of Rome, not solely as for his own country, all the more precious to him for the greater care and trouble he had spent for its safety and reputation, but as for a country adequate to his genius. In saying this I might lean on the support of Seneca, who dared to declare that no voice but that of Cicero was really alive, although by an error of popular speech the phrase has been used of many others, and to affirm that no genius but that of Cicero was on a level with the power of the Roman people. But more trustworthy than any witness whatsoever is the manifest assurance of the facts themselves, which show that as in rule and glory absolute sovereignty belonged to the Roman people, so in intellect and eloquence it belonged to Cicero.

For the rest, it is well known what advantage Cicero derived from solitude, though it was unwillingly. It transformed the greatest of orators into a great philosopher, and there is not a student who does not know how magnificently Latin studies were enriched by this circumstance. In such an outcome Cicero himself found the consolation for his grievance when he said, "As I am kept by force of armed treason away from practical politics and from my practice at the bar, I am now leading a life of leisure. For that reason I have left the city and, wan-

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dering in the country from place to place, I am often alone. . . . I have accordingly," he adds, "written more in this short time since the downfall of the Republic than I did in the course of many years, while the Republic stood."[1] In truth he was not mistaken, for who is able to set forth and appreciate the splendor of this man's intervals of leisure and the fame of his retired dwelling-places in Arpinum, in Cumæ, in Pompeii, in Formiæ, in Tusculum? In one place he projected a system of laws, in another erected an academy, in another equipped the orator, or defined the duties of men, or described the shapes and qualities of the gods, or attacking divination dug up that root of manifold errors, or established the bounds of good and evil, or composed a magnificent exhortation in favor of philosophy which Augustine, the illustrious champion of our faith, frankly admits was his guide in the imitation of life and the pursuit of truth. Finally, lest I should seem with a lover's infatuation to have gone astray in the wake of a single man out of the many that I treat, it was in that retirement, I say, that he learned to despise death, with patience to triumph over physical pain, by reason to banish illness and grief, to eradicate affliction and the causes of affliction, and what, to use his own expression, gives the greatest lustre to his philosophy, he there taught that virtue was in need of no support for the attainment of a good and happy life but was sufficient unto itself, an opinion contrary to that of some great men. Moreover, what others deliver with dry and insipid utterance, he has treated in a style of great eloquence and beauty, so that an element of pleasure might be added to its usefulness and a fitting stateliness of language not be wanting to such majestic thoughts. It is clear that isolation kindled the genius of this man. And if it surprises you that it operated in this way even while it was disliked, what do you think would have been its effect if it were freely chosen? Or how greatly do you think it is to be desired when it is of so much benefit even to those who embrace it with reluctance?

[1] *De Officiis*, Bk. iii, Ch. 1.

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But whatever the manner of life which he would have preferred for himself, he is very positive in setting forth the kind which should be chosen by philosophers, in the book in which he describes the duties proper to every class of men. For he says that many in their craving for repose gave up their public cares and sought refuge in leisure, and among these were the noblest of philosophers, preeminent in their calling, and also certain men of grave and austere character, some of whom, being unable to endure the conduct of the people and of princes, lived on their farms in the enjoyment of their domestic goods and had precisely the same idea as kings, though they did not live by the same practices, wanting no other man's possessions and subject in their freedom to no other man's will. Although in making the comparison he affirms that the active life is more profitable to the state, which in a measure even I will not deny, he admits that the retired life is safer and easier, less burdensome and vexatious than other modes of life, and therefore he not only sanctions it for those who have some fair reason for embracing it, but especially commends it to those who excel in intellect and learning. And although himself, as I have said, was at first impatient of this kind of life, in the end when he was depressed with many sorrows and overwhelmed especially by the death of his beloved daughter, he came to long for it, and, writing to his friend Atticus, said, "I now reject everything and consider nothing more tolerable than solitude,"[2] and again, "Solitude and retirement are my proper sphere; indeed I avoid the city for many reasons."[3] In another place he says, "I cannot endure to be in a crowd,"[4] and yet again, "Nothing is pleasanter than this solitude, in which I am free from all company. I bury myself in the dense and wild woods in the morning and do not issue from them till it is evening."[5] As often as I read this sentence I mentally fall in

[2] *Ad Atticum*, xii, 18.
[3] xii, 26.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] xii, 15.

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with it as though I myself and not another had written it, for the same thing often happens to me. But to take leave of Cicero at last, there is that passage in which he flatters his dear friend by remarking, "After you I have not a greater friend than solitude," and then adding, "In it my only converse is with books."[6] I shall not collect every remark, for from those which I have presented you may see how that lover of the city and the Forum came to hate what he had once loved and placed literary leisure above all things.

Chapter 3. The solitude of Demosthenes

IN THIS particular I surmise that Demosthenes was of the same mind with Cicero, and, unless a reason should appear for changing my opinion, such as I have not yet met in my reading, his feeling was consistent where that of the other wavered. For the calling of both was alike, and Demosthenes was besides rather vain, as Cicero himself points out,[7] deriving pleasure from hearing old women whispering at his back, "That is the great Demosthenes." And yet it is well known that it was in a lonely place that he specially drilled those oratorical powers which he so effectively wielded in the city. Hence Quintilian says of him, "Demosthenes, though so great a lover of seclusion, used to accustom himself, by studying on the seashore, where the breakers dashed with the loudest noise, not to be disconcerted at the uproar of public assemblies."[8] Do not be confused by what I formerly said about Demosthenes[9] being accustomed to choose a spot that was free from all disturbance to ear and eye, whereas here I speak of his seeking the sound of the waves and the open sea. In one place he sharpened his wit, in the other he exercised his voice, but he did both in a lonely place.

[6] *Ad Atticum*, xii, 15.
[7] *Tusculans*, v, 36.
[8] *Institutes*, Bk. x, Ch. 4.
[9] Bk. i, Tract. 5. Ch. 1.

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These men studied in privacy that they might traffic in public, they meditated in the woods that they might make a display in the cities. Their profession was their excuse, since their object was the same, whether by speech or by silence to increase their substance. Though I recall nothing of the sort in the case of Cicero, it is well known, as appears from the *Attic Nights*, that Demosthenes put a price even on his silence. As for us, in whose hearts nothing venal should enter and nothing be a matter of display, but all things should tend to salvation, to the law of life on earth, and the hope of the life to come, we must study in solitude what it remains for us to practice in solitude; we must live in solitude and die in solitude. This is my earnest wish, and if God will look affectionately upon me, I dare even make it my hope.

Chapter 4. Of Anaxagoras and other illustrious men who loved the life of solitude

MY IMPRESSION that philosophers have always in this respect differed in their attitude from orators is derived from observing the difference in their habit of life and above all in their aim. While the mind of one class is fixed on capturing popular applause, the toil of the other, unless their pretension is hypocritical, is occupied in the knowledge of mind introspectively turned upon itself and in contempt of empty fame. For what sort of man shall we suppose Anaxagoras to have been, or Xenocrates, that austerest of philosophers in his steadfastness and abstemiousness, as Cicero reports, or Zeno, the father of the Stoics, or Carneades, the most industrious of them all, whose complete absorption in studious thoughts, as we read, often made him quite forget himself while he was reclining at table? Shall we suppose that it was amidst the turmoils and distractions of men that a mind could preserve such firmness and

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fixity beyond the ninetieth year, rather than in solitude where there is no one to distract it from its object? I for one should not easily be persuaded, though I had nothing to support me beyond my own conjecture, that any of these men lived in the city. Nor should I believe that it was in the streets of a city that Chrysippus had his house or Diogenes his tub, seeing that the former was annoyed by the greetings of men and the latter by the shadow of even the greatest king, were it not for the statement of Jerome, who is nearer to them in time, that Diogenes lived in the doorways and porches of cities. The authority of Jerome and his wide and various reading compels me to believe what I should not equally accept on any man's word, for he surely would not have set down such a thing if he had not found it in a trustworthy writer. Of these men I have now said enough. There is however Solon, whose name is the most celebrated among the Seven Wise Men of Greece. Though in the beginning he was the legislator of his country and its chieftain and ruler, yet in his last years, as Plato's *Timaeus* indicates, he devoted himself to other pursuits. He must be reckoned with the lovers of solitude at the moment when he left the country which he had furnished with its laws and in his eagerness for knowledge went to unknown lands, getting special pleasure from his travels in Egypt.

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THE NINTH TRACTATE

Examples of emperors and military leaders who liked solitude

Chapter 1. About Julius and Augustus Cæsar who loved and wished for solitude

WHAT wonder is it that men of studious pursuits should be fond of solitude when even emperors and generals of armies were fond of it, which is a real cause of wonder. I shall pass over Julius Cæsar, who though a very young man when he decided to withdraw from the struggles of public life to the peaceful atmosphere of Rhodes and devote himself to literature, was prevented at that time by the attacks of pirates and later by the storms of domestic and foreign wars, and was unable to attain to the object of his wishes. I do not include in the number of the solitary the name of Augustus Cæsar, in whom was reached the summit of mortal power and human greatness, even though I find him sometimes living in the country or strolling by himself in the woods, because this was a privilege which the burden of his private and public duties, I suppose, enabled him to enjoy but rarely, but I am not afraid to name him with the admirers of the life of solitude. For he was constantly longing for the restfulness of this kind of life. All his thoughts and all his words terminated in repose, this was his comfort in present toil, this his compensation for labors past, this his expectation for time to come. By comparison with this state every privilege of wealth, every burden of power had a mean flavor as of something troublesome and despicable. In short, being exhausted at the height of his enjoyment of all the honors which can fall to the lot of the most fortunate man, he drew

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breath at the mere naming of the solitary life. Of the truth of this a number of writers have spoken, and it is also witnessed by a letter of his to the Senate which has come into my hands. How great, then, do you suppose would have been his pleasure at attaining the condition on which he had fixed his mind's eye with such tenderness? And it was not only by letters that he appealed to the Senate to allow him at last to live and, if the condition of the state warranted, to spend his old age as a private citizen, but on occasion, as Suetonius reports, he summoned the Senate and magistrates to his presence and turned over to them the imperial reckoning. He continued, however, to exercise power, whether because, as the same historian has it, he thought he could not live privately without danger and that it was rash to entrust the state to the power of numbers, and so kept his wishes in restraint for the sake of his own and the public safety, or whether, as we have a right to believe, he yielded to the entreaty of the Senate and the people, since it is a fact that no prince was ever more loving toward his subjects. Or perhaps he was not at all influenced by any entreaties or any fear for personal or public welfare, but was troubled by a natural human weakness. For to one sitting upon the highest peak of fortune as lord and ruler of the world, the descent to the humble and lowly position of his desire must have seemed very abrupt as he mentally revolved it, and, as the expression goes, a kind of vertigo may have taken possession of him in fear of the dizzy height, and so, after weighing and considering the matter well, he stuck to his place and never descended from it till his death. Therefore, as I have said, though there is no place for this great and active prince among those who actually enjoyed solitude and leisure, yet it was impossible to omit his case in a discussion of the theme because there is no witness through whom the great charm of this blessing may be more clearly recognized. Cæsar, who could give everything, desired only this gift for himself; elevated over all men, he saw only this lifted up above his throne.

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Chapter 2. Of Diocletian and Antoninus Pius as lovers of the solitary life

WHAT was a wish to Augustus became an actuality for Diocletian, the first of our emperors who ordained that he should be worshipped as a god and who, putting pearls on his shoes and garments and coming out loaded with jewels, seemed to convert the habit of the Cæsars from a Roman and human one into something Persian or godlike. He had shortly before celebrated a triumph with captive standards borne in front of his chariot and the booty of the Parthians carried in advance, but afterward he grew weary of the turbulent court and the costly encumbrance, of troops of attendants and of general servility, suddenly changed his mind, and conceived a desire to be alone and poor and free, and to swim out from the sea of imperial cares into the haven of a humbler life, naked like a pilot from a great shipwreck. We admire Celestinus, though that holy man did for the sake of an eternal life what this great sinner had already done for the sake of the very short and uncertain remainder of his old age. And when out of his longing for the utmost peace he surrendered himself to the lot of a private citizen, he did not fix on Rome for the abode of his changed life, lest he should be disturbed by the smoke or the smell of the power he had resigned, but preferred to go to his native town of Salona in Dalmatia, and not inside the city either, but to a place near his native walls where he died in a country house which he had perhaps built with that very end in view. By his solitary and humble life he felt that much serenity had been added to his old age without any diminution to his highest honors. He is the only private citizen, according to the statements of Eutropius and Eusebius, to be reckoned in the number of the gods. However, what Diocletian did after laying down power had been done by Antoninus Pius before the assumption of power. Julius Capitolinus, the historian, records that during his whole private life he lived most commonly in the fields and was famous in all places.

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Chapter 3. The solitude of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome

BUT I go too fast, I must retrace my steps. I shall omit the Quintii, the Curii, the Fabricii, the Serrani and others the greater part of whose life was spent in the fields, and shall show that from the very outset and even before the beginning of the Roman Republic, the wisest and best of the kings enjoyed this form of life. Numa Pompilius, the second in order among the kings if one regards sequence, the first in justice, being as a foreigner summoned unexpectedly to power, when he had applied his whole mind to the care of the civil and religious laws in order by his genius to control and soften a people passionate and imbued with the ferocity of its first king, was often, according to report, accustomed to seek for the purpose a dark and solitary place, which I have seen with my own eyes, distant from the city fifteen miles, or not much more. In that place at the base of the hill of Aricia there is a hollow and shaded rock from which a spring flows perpetually, with ilexes all about, a dense grove and a profound silence. There the king, a very learned man for that time, had formed the practice of discovering human laws and divine ceremonies, or perhaps of giving them a sanction after having discovered them elsewhere. There he sat alone in long silence, and after a great interval he issued forth alone in meditation and brought the written laws with which to control a people as yet rude and untrained but soon to become the ruler of nations. In order to bind their new and untamed spirits with a sort of religious noose and the curb of fear he sought acceptance for his plan by imitating, it is said, the example of the Cretan king Minos and pretending with the boldest fabrication that he enjoyed nightly meetings and converse with the gods. This fiction along with the other sacred mysteries (supposedly) discovered by him, he deplored at his death, issuing books in Latin and Greek by which he might point out as well as he could to those

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learned in either tongue that for the temporary assistance of truth he had used the support of falsehood. But when the authority of the laws introduced by him was already standing on its own foundation, he did not care to have the people involved in superfluous errors. After the lapse of many generations a Roman prætor with the concurrence of the Senate ordered the burning of these books which had been found next to the king's tomb, although I do not know whether it was because he found them dangerous to true religion, which reason he is in fact said to have alleged, or whether he merely sought this pretext, as I am more inclined to believe, and was really concerned lest the people being liberated from fear should shake off the yoke of their nobility. I shall say nothing of the vanity or impiety of the act. For the moment it will be enough to have pointed out that solitude is the source of many excellent things and that from it also flowed the origins of the Roman laws.

Chapter 4. Of Romulus, Achilles, and Hercules who loved solitude

ROMULUS was more fiery and violent than his successor, yet he also trained his mind to affairs in the woods and in a shepherd's hut, so that none but a solitary architect may be regarded as having been fitted for the founding of the greatest empire. It is difficult to conceive: the harshest solitude of all gave to the queen of cities its material, its name, its ground, and its founder. We read that Achilles learned in solitude what soon made him terrible in the cities of Asia and famous in those of Greece. Hercules too attained in solitude that wholesome plan of life which I have mentioned in the preceding book, when, hesitating long and much as though at a parting of the ways, he ultimately spurned the way of pleasure and took possession of the path of virtue, and marching indefatigably along its course he was raised not only to the apex of human glory but to a repu-

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tation of divinity. Although the fame of this man extends its branches high and wide, if you look for its roots your mind must turn back to solitude.

Chapter 5. Of the two Scipios as unusual lovers of solitude, and the discussion of the magnificent phrase uttered by one of them that he was never less idle than when at leisure and never less lonely than when alone, with a reproof to Ambrose for transferring that saying to the prophets

BUT whither shall we dismiss the two Africani, by far the greatest of all military leaders? Truly they are the two thunder-bolts of war, as Virgil says, and I am surprised that some persons take this to refer to anybody else. The first of them, as we learn in Livy, from the time that he put on the dress of manhood never any day performed a public or private action before going to the Capitol, entering a temple, sitting down, and spending some time there in secrecy. This habit was maintained during his whole life. Thus did that singular man, whose celebrity does not come from Greek legends and superstitions but from ripe Roman judgments, and who also gained the reputation of divine origin because of his admired virtue, depend upon religion for the beginning of his enterprise and reckon solitude as the best abode for religion. From that starting point, he was accustomed to assail the business, whatever it was, with more than human confidence and to promise a prosperous issue of his undertakings to himself and his followers; and in fact he never failed. Besides, not to separate two so closely allied and so much alike, it is a familiar fact that both of these men, each in his time, were as much lovers of solitude as of

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virtue, and after the exertions of war, after the victories and triumphs, were accustomed to remove to Liternum or Formiæ or Caieta and to rest there, alone with a few friends.

O excellent spectacle, transcending the pomps and sceptres of all kings, to see such men, the preservers of the state, the liberators of the citizens, the defenders of Italy, the conquerors of nations, their task successfully performed, the victorious people dismissed free and rejoicing, their bodyguard left in Rome, their triumphal habit put off and the insignia of their rank eagerly restored, strolling alone, at leisure, and unconscious of depressing cares, over the hills and along the shore, and often picking up little shells or sea pebbles of different sorts, both white and black. I find in Cicero, set down with the greatest respect and reverence, that they used to grow incredibly child-like when they flew out of the city to the country, as though they had escaped from chains. But surely, beautiful thoughts followed in the train of that solitude, and in that leisure some quality of greatness always appeared. And so Cicero himself, in the passage in which he mourns his own solitude, admires that of the elder Africanus and, relying on the evidence of his contemporary and rival, Cato, he inserts Scipio's utterance, a magnificent one, as he calls it, and worthy of a great and wise man, that he was never less idle than when at leisure, and never less lonely than when alone.

Strange to say, Ambrose tries to wrest the glory of this saying from his fellow-citizen, but there is never wanting civil strife where Romans are concerned—they fight even in their books. Now it is in the third book of the *Offices* that Cicero bestows this praise on Scipio, and to make the matter quite obvious Ambrose, who imitates Cicero not only in many of the details but in the title and the number of his books as well, in the corresponding portion of his work, that is, at the very beginning of the third book, strives with laborious argument to transfer the honor snatched from Scipio Africanus to the prophets of the Lord, Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, on the ground that long

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before Scipio they were active in leisure and enjoyed companionship in solitude. I shall not contend with Ambrose, for I know that he speaks the truth, and even if I did not know it, he would crush me with his authority much more effectively than Plato crushed Cicero. For his authority is great with me, and not undeservedly, since I believe the Holy Ghost speaks through his mouth. How should I dare to suspect that Moses was ever alone, who was not only always with himself, which is the very quality of a wise and learned man, but with whom God spoke face to face as a friend with a friend? And how should I think him idle when, sitting silent and unarmed, he cried out to the Lord and was heard as far as the heavens, and when, with difficulty and by the assistance of another lifting up his weary hands, he overcame by himself the strong hands of so many enemies, which armed legions could not do without his help? How should I think Elijah lonely, with whom likewise God and angels conversed, and how think him idle when he commanded the rain, and with a word provided an unfailing barrel of meal and an inexhaustible cruse of oil for his hostess who was in fear of death from starvation, and with a great effort of faith restored her dead son to her alive? How should I call his disciple Elisha lonely when he showed his servant, who was trembling with fear of the enemy, the supporting chariots and horses and angelic troops which were invisible to others? How call him idle when according to his promise he gave to his Shunamite hostess a son by her aged husband and restored that son again by reviving him after he had died in childhood, so that a single boy might serve as proof of his prophetic faith and power? But what is there remarkable in his power of resuscitation while alive, when he is known after his death by the mere contact of his body to have brought the dead to life? Moreover, who will regard him as idle when, sitting in complete leisure, he knew all the attempts of those who were out of his sight and the thoughts and plans of the enemy as though he were present, making report of everything to his adherents? Having this

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knowledge, when he was encompassed with an entire army at the order of the king of Syria, he reduced the legions of the besiegers by the mere bidding of his tongue to blindness and captivity and then with a word freed them again. These are the marks of a dominating leisure and of a very potent solitude. But granted that the glory of the character is of greater antiquity with the prophets, who clearly come first both in time and in merit, is the praise of Scipio any less because some one has preceded him in the same kind of praise, especially since there can be no question of imitation where, as I feel certain, there has been no communication of knowledge? I do not deny that imitation usually detracts and diminishes a trifle of the commendation and fame of human achievements, but surely, whoever may receive the original title for the qualities, the saying, which made me after so long an interval revert to the names of these prophets, is original with Scipio and belongs to him alone, and in that even Ambrose will not contradict me.

Chapter 6. Explaining, by an interpretation of the saying of the Elder Scipio, about what kind of solitude and leisure the author intends to speak

THE force of this aphorism is to impress in a few words what I have in mind. I mean a solitude that is not exclusive, leisure that is neither idle nor profitless but productive of advantage to many. For I agree that those who in their leisure are indolent, sluggish, and aloof, are always melancholy and unhappy, and for them there can be no performance of honorable actions, no absorption in dignified study, no intercourse with distinguished personalities. This then is the sum. I do not admit into our leisure employments that are more incon-

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stant than the winds but only such as have some fixity, whose result is not trouble and gain and dishonor but satisfaction and virtue and fame. The holiday which I ordain is for the body, not for the mind; I do not allow the intellect to lie fallow except that it may revive and become more fertile by a period of rest. For a rest benefits the brain just as it benefits the soil. Furthermore, in my solitude I not only entertain but take pains to summon noble thoughts, than which no companionship can be imagined more agreeable and charming, and without which life is miserable whether in cities or in the woods. Then there are books of different kinds in whose substance and whose authors one has pleasant, unfailing companions, ready at his bidding to go into public or return to his house, always prepared to be silent or to speak, to stay at home or to accompany him in the woods, to travel, to remain in the country, to converse, to amuse, to cheer, to comfort, to advise, to dispute, to consult, to teach the secrets of nature, the memorable deeds of history, the rule of life and the contempt of death, moderation in prosperity, fortitude in adversity, equanimity and steadfastness in all our actions; cheerful associates, learned, humble, and eloquent, free from annoyance and expense, without complaint or grumbling, without envy or treachery. Add to all these benefits that they do not ask for food or drink and are content with scant raiment and a narrow portion of the house, though they afford their hosts inestimable treasures of mind, spacious houses, brilliant attire, delightful entertainment, and most savory food. Into my solitude I also admit friends,—that sweet society of which I have said a good deal already—without whom I should look upon life as deformed and stunted, as a thing altogether devoid of light. Whenever toward night, as may happen, a friendly hand knocks at my door,

> If, on a rainy day, when work is slack,
> Some pleasant neighbor or old friend drops in,[1]

[1]Horace, *Satires* ii, ii, 118-9 (Hovenden's translation).

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(I think these verses were composed by Horace from a deep experience of the pleasure of friendly intercourse, and were drawn by him from the very heart of nature) whenever, I say, such a guest happens my way—keeping in mind that the welcome depends upon long separation and that I am free from tasks, lest you should think that I take pleasure in frequent conviviality or in interruptions to my work—then it seems to me that I have found not another, but myself somehow duplicated. Surely they are not two who have a single mind. Love knows how to make one from two, otherwise the command of Pythagoras were impossible that through friendship many should be united into one. From this it follows that any place which is capable of holding one person can hold two friends. No solitude is so profound, no house so small, no door so narrow but it may open to a friend.

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THE TENTH TRACTATE

Exhorting the friend to whom the author writes to embrace the solitary life, and removing the obstacles and refuting the arguments of those who oppose this life, together with a most notable commendation of solitude

Chapter 1. Persuasion to solitude, on account of the virtues of the person to whom the book is addressed and of the friends granted to him by destiny as a compensation to the life of solitude

IN YOUR own case, father, if you but knew yourself and your advantages, there is nothing wanting that can make solitude agreeable and leisure delightful. You have an excellent mind and one moreover well developed by the years, refined with much care, taught in many arts and sciences,—a mind to guide and control human actions and holding the rudder of our entire life, and with such piloting the voyage ought not to be other than fortunate. You are acquainted with the illustrious and distinguished men who have lived—I should like to say with those who are living, but you see how things go. If, however, there are any such surviving now, they are indeed not unknown to you. With some of them you can converse only in imagination, a form of intercourse which neither seas nor mountains will deprive you of; with some you may also hold bodily converse. Perhaps you are rich

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in the latter kind, although there has never been a great abundance of this commodity, and the scarcity at present is conspicuous. But I believe I ought to insert one name here as a mark of compliment. Among those whom destiny has granted to you for your comfort in the life of solitude is Pons Samson,[1] who next to you gives most distinction to your church. Concerning him, since I have known him most intimately from early youth and think I have even surer knowledge of him now, I shall speak with particular confidence. I am inclined to believe that the name of Samson did not fall to him by chance but arose from his nature, because he is as remarkable for strength of mind, refinement, and prudence as the Jewish hero was for strength of body; in addition he is endowed with no slight knowledge of literature and with such sweetness of character as can easily alleviate whatever harshness may pertain to the state of solitude. Embrace him, as is your practice, with your whole heart; summon him to share your leisure and retirement. For if I am not mistaken in my guess, he will follow you willingly, and being tired out with the life of the city will have no dread of abandoning it.

But alas, where am I leaving our Socrates?[2] Or am I deceived? Do I really leave him, seeing that while the others are only companions, he is an integral part of us, and while they have to be invited, he is indissolubly joined to us by love? You know the man, endeared by firm and faithful friendship and ennobled by familiar association with the Muses. With him your life will be joyous and pleasant so as never to be wanting in wise

[1] A priest of the church of Cavaillon. There are two brief letters of Petrarch to him (*Fam.* xiv, 8; xv, 10). Nothing else is known about him.

[2] The person to whom this name was habitually attached in the circle of Petrarch's friends was of German or Flemish origin whose name must have been something like Ludwig Kempen. The form adopted by Fracassetti is Luigi di Campinia. Petrarch made his acquaintance about 1330 in the household of the Colonna in which "Socrates" exercised some function connected with the profession of music. The friendship between the two men was of the firmest and endured till the death of "Socrates" in the plague of 1361. To this friend Petrarch dedicated his *Familiar Letters*. See Fracassetti, *Lettere Familiari*, vol. i, p. 251.

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counsel, intellectual stimulus, and mental vigor, with never a cloud of melancholy intruding such as is sometimes associated with those powers; but that equability of a countenance ever cheerful which we are wont to admire and praise in the ancient Socrates, we behold and love in our friend as well. However, I shall not pass in silence over our Guido, than whom there is no one more pure and open in spirit, keener in intellect, weightier in judgment, more agreeable in conversation. Let him be admitted as the fifth in our company, not the seventh as his name of Settimo[8] suggests.

I cannot imagine anything pleasanter than this society, although others might be available suited to our wishes and pursuits, were it not that some inequality in our conditions, some obstacle of a general kind, and the inextricable tangle of human affairs acted invidiously against us. But the number of the former will suffice, and Fortune herself cannot restrain us from enjoying the society of the others in imagination. With these men by you, neither grievous sickness nor pressing occupation nor need of occasional journeys can so sunder us as to leave you without some one for a constant companion. Why should I enumerate all the particulars? Nothing will be wanting if only you will be not wanting.

You also have means that are freely at your disposal without being in the least burdensome, or to put the same thing in different words, your poverty is neither afflicting nor degrading but honorable and cheerful and, if we would admit the truth, an occasion of envy to many. You have a good supply of books, an ardent love of reading, an understanding and a memory conferred from heaven and strengthened by watching and study. As to what follows, I should have observed silence, for so modesty dictated,

[8]Guido Settimo or Sette was a hereditary and lifelong friend of the poet. Their fathers had suffered exile together from Florence and the sons were educated in the same school. Petrarch reviews in a long letter (*Senili*, x, 2) the incidents of their friendship. In a letter to Boccaccio (*Senili*, v, 1) he refers to him as "another self—such was the accord and harmony between us since our childhood." He studied canon law and attained distinction in the Church, became first Archdeacon and then Archbishop of Genoa, where he died in 1368.

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if I did not know that the value of things depended on the affection of the one who used them. Therefore I say that I myself shall be in your company, and the work of my pen, of which you are so fond, shall never fail you, offering each day something new the esteem of which, because of your insatiable desire for reading it, I confess would be doubled in my eyes, were it not for the consideration, as I remarked at the outset, that affection, according to the old saying, hinders the judgment. I recall how often you have preferred a book of mine before one of Plato and Cicero, not to mention lesser writers. When you would enter my library (which often you do not as bishop but as friend), eager to read with a thirst that is never slaked, and I would offer you the divine works of those godlike intellects, you would wave aside what I put before you, turn away your head, and ask only for my own. In this preference there was not necessarily an error of judgment; you might have been actuated by your perfect knowledge of the ancients, which did not require repeated reading, or by the love of novelty in my writings. For though the authority of ancient literature is greater, and it is true, as Horace says, that time improves poetry as it does wine,[4] yet newness has an attraction of its own, and it may please you to discover what progress I have been making with the passage of time, for nothing is more attentive and more inquisitive than friendship. But be the cause what it may, I have often secretly wondered at your enthusiasm. Sometimes, after being away, I have learned of your interest from the mouth of my steward who would greet me on my return with vehement reproaches, asking why I had carried off some paper or other which you were in the habit of demanding to see when you visited my house. I laughed and marvelled at the affection of the father, or the fidelity of the keeper, or the innocence of the steward. And so when I went away another time I would play a joke on the old fellow and give him some blank paper, saying that was what you were asking

[4] *Epistles*, ii, 1, 34.

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for. When he discovered how he had been tricked he would once more on my return make bitter complaint, but in the end the whole thing passed off in mirth and laughter.

Chapter 2. Concerning the things which the solitary man should always desire and concerning his habitation

BUT I return to my theme. You have then, in addition, that without which life is, I will not merely say lacking in happiness, but not life at all. I mean a hatred of evil and love of good, a reverence for virtue, a beautiful aspiration for a good name, an interest in what is honorable, a scorn for what is futile. If I call this one of the foundations of the solitary life, I shall maintain that I am speaking the truth. You have a body apt to sustain toil, of matured strength not verging toward the decline; you are in that flourishing age which has attained its freedom from the evils of adolescence, that best portion of life which is neither unacquainted with action nor unresourceful in counsel, but capable of daring great matters. You have, finally, a country in which as citizen and bishop you occupy the highest place in the affection and reverence of the people, enjoying the one because of your character, the other because of your rank, and both because of your virtue and desert. Fortune has granted you for a country a place which, though your episcopate dignifies it with the appellation of city, yet apart from its antiquity and designation has nothing of the city about it, not the luxury, nor the populousness, nor the turmoil, features which render it particularly suitable for the life of which I am speaking. If I am accurate in my calculation, I find that it was already esteemed in authentic writings among the ancient cities of that time, about

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fifty years before the coming of our Lord, when Julius Cæsar was attacking Britain. The appearance of the place is such that as often as we came to visit you there, our Socrates was accustomed to remark with considerable elegance, "Here is the city, small indeed but honorable, which according to the ecclesiastical histories was offered to our Savior Jesus by King Abagarus." In its very midst you can, if you wish, make a solitude for yourself. You do not need a long journey to attain the object which many of those whom I have formerly described sought in flight. The character of your situation is such that you may lead the life of a solitary in your own country and in the bosom of your own people, an opportunity scarcely to be despised. You have that at home which many have looked for beyond the seas.

But if your own nest displeases you and you are looking for some freer spot, you may flit to a branch nearby and place yourself in this most pleasant and peaceful abode at the head of the neighboring stream. Within your reach is the Sorgue, that matchless spring to whose murmuring accompaniment I compose these words. Within your reach is the free and delightful seclusion of Valchiusa—the Closed Valley, as the inhabitants call it and as nature meant it to be called, for she has hidden it among the encompassing hills away from every road and every common intrusion, and has not permitted it to be seen by any save those that dwell in it. Here you may enjoy in a rare union the privileges of being free and a lord, a dignitary and in solitude. Can you scorn a place which has inspired awe and amazement in strangers? According to Seneca, "a cave, made by the deep crumbling of the rocks and holding up a mountain on its arch, a place not built with hands but hollowed out into such spaciousness by natural causes, will deeply move the soul by a certain intimation of the existence of God."[5] If that is true, where, I ask, is there a cave more suited to inspiring religious awe? And if his next observation is

[5] *Epistles*, 41.

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true, that "we worship the sources of mighty rivers," where shall we find a more conspicuous object of worship? I have seen rivers greater in length and in the volume of their waters but none with so splendid a source. A third remark of Seneca's is that "we erect altars at places where great streams burst suddenly from hidden sources," and if that is so, where shall altars be more fittingly located? Such altars, Christ is my witness, I have long thought of erecting, if opportunity should favor my wishes, there in my little garden which lies in the shadow of the cliffs and overhangs the stream, and I shall dedicate them not to the nymphs, as Seneca thought, nor to any of the pagan deities of springs and rivers, but to Mary, whose ineffable conception and fruitful virginity overturned all the altars and temples of the gods. Perhaps she will lend me her aid that I may some time bring to completion what I have long and, if I mistake not, piously desired.

I now resume where I left off. Can you, then, disdain your own place when strangers venerate it—a place most propitious for freedom and peace and leisure and study and virtue, and, not to linger over particulars, for all things, in sum, in which you are interested,—a place, even if other things are disregarded, once honored by a great occupant who is an object of special devotion with you? You know that your Veranus, the excellent confessor of Christ, who, I do not know how many years before your time, lived in your province, which is even now uncommonly wild, came here in quest of a peaceful spot for a rest, and after expelling the terrible dragon led a holy and solitary life in this locality. I have not overlooked his name among the friends of illustrious solitude but have only deferred it to the last in order to fix it more firmly in the memory, not so much for you as for others who may chance to read this. For from your memory he cannot be torn because you are daily reminded of him, having always his shrine before your eyes, a witness of your faith, to the

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completion of which as a shelter for the relics of the saint you have contributed all your zeal and all your wealth, cheating your stomach as the saying goes, giving in fact all the silver and gold you ever had, best of men that you are. Verily here he dwelt while he lived, before the virtue was discovered which caused his elevation against his will to the troubles of the pontifical rank. Here, as in a hostile land which he had conquered and pacified and redeemed for human cultivation, he raised a trophy to Christ, under whose protection and banners he had gained the victory, erecting a fair Church in the name of the Virgin Mother, small in size but elegant. By the labor of his own hands, it is said, he cut through this stubborn flint and made a passage over this mighty mountain, a work of enormous zeal and industry. On this bank he had a cell, being rich in Christ and contented with his little garden and stream. And dying at last far from this place, it was here that he wished to be brought back and buried, as you know, making use of a clear and amazing miracle. The same power which the rod of the living Moses displayed in the crossing of the Red Sea was exercised, if we may rely on faith, in the crossing of rivers by the cloak of the dead Veranus. Enough of this, for though much remains that can be spoken in praise of your countryside, much, too, has been spoken and often, and for this day an end must be made of our conversation.

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Chapter 3. Whoever wishes to serve God or develop his own powers by virtuous practices or accomplish any other good work, let him escape, lest while he appears to be helping others he incur his own ruin and commit that fault which he reproves in others

THEREFORE, whether our desire is to serve God, which is the only freedom and the only felicity, or by virtuous practices to develop our mind, which is the next best application of our labor, or through reflection and writing to leave our remembrance to posterity and so arrest the flight of the days and extend the all too brief duration of our life, or whether it is our aim to achieve all these things together, let us, I pray you, make our escape at length and spend in solitude what little time remains, taking every precaution that, while we seem to be bringing aid to the shipwrecked, we be not ourselves overwhelmed by the waves or shattered against the rocks of human activities. Finally, what we approve, that let us perform, lest we be guilty of the common weakness with which we often reproach others, and make our words and judgments disagree with our actions.

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Chapter 4. We ought not to seek great wealth, for it is a hindrance instead of an aid

LET no one deceive us, let no one persuade us that great riches are called for in this kind of life. They are a hindrance rather than an aid, they weigh down instead of lifting up. This life is reached by an ascent, and no one will ascend high if of his own accord he burdens himself with superfluous loads or ties himself up with a noose. Nothing is heavier than gold, nothing more binding; except so far as it contributes to our necessities, it is neither to be desired nor liked. For whenever avarice is served, there is nothing which more bows down the carrier, depresses him, and forces him down to the ground. Nor is it any wonder if, coming from the ground, it is carried back to the ground by its own weight. It is not fitting for a soul of heavenly origin to be buried under heaps extracted from a hole in the ground, to be polluted with filth. Gold presents, to be sure, a brilliancy and softness to the senses which is deceptive to the mind, but it actually brings darkness and thorns and the stings of grievous and tormenting troubles, and the more refined its appearance, the more it is tainted with hidden evils. Riches never come alone, but bring with them many and divers ills and endless burdens and occasions of strife. If you do not take my word for it, ask those who are called happy and bid them on their oath not to conceal any of the truth, and you will find that their life has been filled with tortures, so that what you used to regard with admiration you will come to look at with horror or scorn, and understand that in the life to which I encourage you great riches are of no benefit at all, but often of the greatest possible mischief. Therefore, far from having so much pains spent in their acquisition, they should rather be thrown away if they are excessive, until they reach the measure established by nature and virtue, as is the man-

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ner of sailors distressed by a heavy storm who save their ship by sacrificing their cargo.

It strangely enters my mind at this point to request and implore you, father, (and myself along with you) to submit to a piece of advice useful to both of us, once given by a boy to an old man. The boy was Alcibiades, who later as a man was distinguished for his beauty and genius and is an illustrious example of the vicissitudes of fortune; his uncle was Pericles, himself numbered with the rare spirits, conspicuous for the power of his eloquence and trusting more to the tongue than the sword for the wielding of his great power. Coming to his uncle one day as was his habit, the lad Alcibiades found the old man more troubled than usual, and feeling disturbed perhaps at not being received with the customary signs of affection, he repeatedly tried, it is said, to learn the reason of his uncle's sadness, and what had befallen. The old man, being pleased, I suppose, with the boy's wit, did not conceal the true reason from him and said that he had spent a huge sum of money in behalf of the state and with all his brain-wracking was unable to discover a way to render an account of his outlay. Then Alcibiades, speaking beyond his years, said, "You should rather consider how to avoid rendering an account,"—a clever bit of advice even if it had been given by an old man, and a large and evident augury of his riper years. Leaning on this hint, his uncle stirred up a foreign war and so escaped the difficulty of giving an accounting. But I return to the advice, in which I generally approve not the injustice of the action but the keenness and quickness of mind. I am urging the application to our own use of this ripe counsel given by a boy, but not before it has been converted into different terms. For behold, there will come persons who will show us the way to great riches, which is nothing else than to teach avarice,—verily a pernicious school, and exceedingly laborious and difficult doctrine, to be learned only with great expense of vigils and toil and destined either to miss its goal or to do injury by its

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success. To a mind occupied in such thoughts let us say, "Consider, rather, the way to avoid the desire of riches." For that is the more useful, and certainly the easier art, and if the mind is a little slow and indisposed for this lesson, it should be stimulated with additional incentives. Let us prove to it that, aside from the evils of riches concerning which I have just been speaking and which are daily in the mouths of many persons, this art is in our own hands while the other is in the power of fortune. Any one may despise wealth, to gain it is not so easy. You know that saying of our friend, "Why should I demand of fortune that she give, rather than demand of myself that I should not crave?"* And so I think it is better to leave unattempted an undertaking which is difficult and of doubtful issue and which, even if it were of assured utility, would be ill-timed and too late. For lo, shall we perspire and pant and torture ourselves for fear of lacking sustenance in our short and perishable existence when, as I said, we already have means heaped up to the extent of enviable luxury? But suppose even that we want for something, what king is there who does not want for something? At this point some one will say that we should rise aloft with a great impulse and like the gods banish altogether every fear of want for the future. But even if for the moment it is banished quite, in time it will return with greater force.

*Seneca, *Epistles*, 15.

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Chapter 5. That a life anxious with solicitude for the morrow is not life but preparation for life, that avarice should be vanquished and the way to true riches learned

CICERO, you recall, writing once to his brother said, "As for your frequent exhortations to me in the past to ambition and work, I shall act on them, but when shall we live?"[7] A brief question but a pregnant one. Similarly may not any one reply with sufficient point and seriousness to the adviser I have just spoken of? "Your suggestion, my friend, is good, if only it is practicable. But when shall we begin to live, I pray you, whose part it clearly is not merely to begin to live but already to have lived?" For this life of constant anxiety, directed toward the morrow, is not life at all, but preparation for a life which may never come and which is well known to be doubtful. Among many observations of the plebeian poet you may hold this one as not spoken in an ignorant manner,

> Trust me, it is not the nature of a wise man to say,
> "I shall live."[8]

It is too late to live tomorrow, you must live today. The advice of Alcibiades is of wide scope and applicable to many things. Vengeance is provocative, appetite is tempting, ambition brings anxiety, love inflames one to carry out what is difficult and to scorn what is easy. Let us teach our mind that the way to the infliction of injury is doubtful and dangerous and that while we seek revenge we often but accumulate the wrongs; that the service of the appetite is vile and the troublesome preparation issues in a disgraceful conclusion; that ambition is always windy, calling for a humble appeal to the people,

[7] *Ad Quintum, Fr.*, iii, 1, 12.
[8] *Martial*, i, 15, 11.

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than which nothing is more distasteful; that love is impudent and domineering, requiring service to silly women, than which nothing is more undignified for a strong man, an occasion of idle mirth and of mourning, and often no less when the outcome is happy than when it is sad, so great is the vanity of the thing. For all these temptations there is a single rule. Since in satisfying these desires thought is obstructed, and mortal griefs and causes of misfortune will never be wanting, in order to escape from them and be happy and free, only contempt will avail. Therefore we should rather consider how to avoid getting into these difficulties than how to extricate ourselves from them. See to what a manly judgment that boyish saying can be applied.

But leaving the other things out of account and regarding only what concerns us at the moment, let us by this desire overcome that avarice which dangles great riches before us as necessary for our leisure, and by disdaining mortal inclinations, curbing our passions, and setting a proper value on natural modesty, let us learn the short way to true wealth. For in truth, cupidity, while it is injurious to all who aim at virtue, is particularly hostile to our purpose, for it has no end, and by heaping up superfluities burdens with a handicap the life to which it promises a support, and which ought not to be heavily encumbered but lightly equipped and mobile. Surely it is well known that many who seemed capable of everything have been hindered in achieving this one thing by the greatness of their wealth and power.

But nothing hinders you, unless (which I am far from suspecting), you are in your own way. You can, indeed you can, provided you prefer to cut all the knots at one stroke instead of untying them one by one. We are engaged with a hydra; there will be no end unless we cut off its ever-sprouting heads in the style of Hercules. I not only know how, but have already begun to lead the life of solitude, and I shall easily persevere in it if I am reinforced on the lonely way by a leader and companion like you, who will be not only a support to my peace but, if I

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may somehow express what is in my mind, my very peace, not only a comfort in my solitude, but in a way the very soul of my solitude. When I am with you I shall think myself truly solitary. I have gone before and tried the way; do thou at least follow, though you ought to have been the leader. Like one who has crossed a dangerous torrent I call from the opposite bank and bid you pass over boldly: there is not the slightest danger. Where I first set foot everything was slippery and uncertain; here I can report everything is safe and pleasant. If you hesitate, if you delay, I shall recross and retrace the footsteps which I have marked clearly, as Virgil says, in order that I may take you by the hand, as it were, and lead you to these places. When you have grown habituated to them you will look upon the chambers of kings and the courts of popes as prisons and noisome dungeons.

Chapter 6. The remedies against a slothful progress toward solitude

BUT if we cannot all at once free ourselves from all the bonds which hold the spirit captive—for this is among the lessons which men begin to teach before they have themselves learned it—let us at least treat solitude in a friendly fashion. Let us transport ourselves to its province with all the little encumbrances of our fortune. When we shall find ourselves able to dispense with these, we shall at last come into our full liberty. Meanwhile, as things are, we shall surely live nowhere more peacefully.

I do not plead thus strenuously because I distrust you, nor am I trying to persuade you with such a great effort of language as though to something harsh and difficult, since I know the elevation of your mind and that you have illustrious and familiar guides to this road or even to a more exacting one. For Martin, in whom your trust is great and with whom, judging from your pilgrimages and conversations, I have noticed you are most friendly

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among the friends of Christ, observed this manner of life, as is clear from an earlier passage, embracing the repose of a solitary and retaining the rank of a bishop at the same time, so that Gennadius justly calls him both a monk and a bishop. His course is especially striking because he adopted it even before baptism (which is particularly difficult), and during youth and military service, both of which are unfavorable to such resolutions, and he lived in such a way that already at that time, as is set down in the account of his life, he was looked upon as a monk rather than a soldier. Mænas, whose birthday is the same as Martin's, is another who changed earthly service for heavenly, but he lived in the desert instead of the city. To this refuge also came Gregory Nazianzen when he was distracted from his industrious study, as Jerome reports, and ordaining a bishop in his place, lived in the country in monastic fashion. How great his love was for this kind of life, you may infer from the circumstance that much earlier, shortly after his departure from the school of Athens, he laid his hand on Basil of Cæsarea,[9] his famous compatriot and fellow-student and also his brother in the flesh, as Augustine, following rumor, declares, and took him down from his lecturer's chair where he was teaching rhetoric with great success, and with the remarkable confidence and the authority of love drew him away to solitude and better studies.

[9]There is a confusion here between the two Gregories—Gregory Nazianzen, the friend of Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's brother.

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Chapter 7. The refutation of the arguments of those who oppose the solitary life

BUT I hear again, on the other hand, the clamor that is usually raised against this view. For in the first place they try to stir a grudge against us out of the Bible. "Woe to him that is alone, when he falleth: for he hath not another to help him up,"[10] and "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor,"[11] and many other things of that kind. But if they paid attention to what I thought and said, they would make no such statements. In the next place they oppose me with Aristotle's saying that man is by nature a social animal or that one who does not associate with others is either a beast or a god, as if I had been suggesting hatred or prohibiting all association with man, or as if the choice were doubtful whether I should prefer to be a beast or God, I mean a man of beastly or divine characteristics. Moreover, they mutter against me that passage of Cicero in which, not content with having explained once that society has its origin not in necessity, as some have thought, but in the nature of man, he alleges as his best proof for the matter that any man, though he were supplied with all resources and free from all necessity, would yet shun solitude and seek a companion for his study. To all these objections I think I have made sufficient answer in the first book. For if I did not in this fully agree with Cicero, I should not myself say that we should seek for a friend, or even friends, in our solitude and study, and cherish them. I get the force of these objections and all others of the same kind that are usually adduced against me. I am not unaware, too, that Aphraates, whom I have spoken of formerly, and the famous hermit Julian left the wilderness and went to

[10] *Eccles.*, iv, 10.
[11] *Ibid.*, iv, 9.

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Antioch, and that the more famous St. Anthony went to Alexandria and other cities, but I know that they did it not spontaneously nor for any frivolous reason but for some grave necessity and momentous decision of faith. For those holy men knew what was appropriate to each season, both when there was need of enjoying peace and when it was necessary to prefer cities to solitude. I know that what they add to the foregoing and what I quite often hear objected in my presence is almost absurd. "What would happen," they say, "if you could persuade all men in general of your design? Who then would live in the cities? Beware lest you speak against the interests of the state." But the facts themselves may reply clearly. If indeed everybody should remove from the city, there would be a definite ground for changing my opinion. The solitudes would have to be deserted, since they would no longer be solitudes, and we should have to return forthwith to the places from which the restless populace, father of all weariness, had departed. But it is all right. The disposition of men at large is not of such a sort: the multitude does not lend ears so alert and wide open to honest advice. I shall be glad if I can persuade the few. It is indeed not reasonable to induce all men to lead one kind of life, particularly the life of solitude, and so I do not speak for everybody, but for you and myself, and for those few with whose dispositions these unusual habits agree. For us, surely, if we follow not the foolish opinion of the crowd but our own nature, nothing is more appropriate.

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Chapter 8. Exhortation to solitude and that cities should be left to worldly people

LET us leave the city with no idea of returning to it, lest having put our hand to the plow we should look backward. Let us rather pray that we may never return to the ungrateful crowd which is undeserving of the regard of all good men. This is said to have been the action of Lentulus, who under the color of an honorable departure chose a lifelong exile, and it is an example which hatred of the vulgar, at least, should have persuaded us to imitate, if the love of peace was not enough. There is also the less familiar but more religious example of the Phœnician monk Chronius who, when he entered his solitude, prayed he might never depart from it and imposed many duties on himself to confirm his resolve and in order that his prayers might not be ineffectual. We must tear up the roots of our troubles, break the chains which hold us confined, destroy the bridges behind us, so that no hope of flight or return will remain. I shall not say to you what Palladius, the narrator of such instances, reports as the advice given to him by John, that Egyptian hermit whom I have already spoken of. "You are going to be a bishop," he said, "and are going to have a great many tribulations and labors. If therefore you wish to avoid them, do not forsake our solitude; for no one is going to make you a bishop while you are living in the desert." I shall say nothing to you about the bishopric, seeing you already have the dignity which the other was warned to guard against, and that it is no longer possible for you not to have been a bishop, a rank to which your early ripened virtue raised you before the customary age. But my advice will be as close as possible to that given by John. For your episcopate is of a character which makes you in dignity equal to the greatest while giving you a freedom such as belongs to a

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moderate and humble station, so that if you fear the burdens of a greater diocese you were best cherish our place of retirement, and if you wish to be freed from the bonds of immortal troubles you should seek out this haven, saying like that celebrated Roman centurion when he was returning from his severe campaign, "This is the best place to stop." If this phrase uttered by chance was inferred for an omen of such mighty power, it should not be held cheap when deliberately spoken.

Arise, come, hasten, let us abandon the city to merchants, attorneys, brokers, usurers, tax-gatherers, scriveners, doctors, perfumers, butchers, cooks, bakers and tailors, alchemists, fullers, artisans, weavers, architects, statuaries, painters, mimes, dancers, lute-players, quacks, panderers, thieves, criminals, adulterers, parasites, foreigners, swindlers, and jesters, gluttons who with scent alert catch the odor of the market-place, for whom that is the only bliss, whose mouths are agape for that alone. For on the mountains there is no smell of cookery, and it is a torment for them to miss their customary delights. Let them be, they are not of our kind. Let the rich count their coins and employ therein the aid of arithmetic, we shall calculate our wealth without science and without art. We have no cause to envy them unless, which God forbid, we are still children to be caught by painted figments. "Remove the frontlet from horses that are for sale," is an old caution. No sane man wants to marry a misfeatured girl because she is well dressed. If we tear off the frontlet, or the mask rather, from those who are so gay in their purple, we shall clearly see their wretchedness. Let them have their kind of wealth, their habits, their pleasures. In truth, the riches they would like to keep forever will depart, and the pleasures they would fain hold back by force will escape, but the habits which they will then wish to be rid of will remain and accompany them against their will. Everything which they display for the wonder of the vulgar will vanish in an instant. They live beneath the sway of fortune, and though she should spare them, death will not spare. They who possess the most precious

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things, if they can be said to possess the objects to which they are enslaved, will themselves soon fall to the possession of the basest creatures, and from them an ungrateful heir or perhaps a hateful foe will receive their ill-got wealth. Their bodies will go to worms and owls, their souls to Tartarus, their names to eternal oblivion. On the other hand, however poor he be here below, "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."[12]

Therefore let not a seeming prosperity and an actual misery stir us to emulation; let the soft and luxurious men of wealth be far removed from our neighborhood. Let them enjoy their hot baths and brothels, great halls and dining places, while we delight in woods and mountains, meadows and streams. Let them enjoy their carnal desires and their lucre from wherever it comes; let us pursue our humane and honorable studies, and if it be thought desirable to mingle some physical activity with our employments, let it be the tilling of the fields or hunting. Although in the latter there is a suggestion of noisiness which is not in keeping with our regimen (for it is an old saying that many words are wasted in hunting), nevertheless I know that some very thoughtful men have considered it favorable to meditation and study, probably because of the solitude and the deep coverts of the woods and the silence of those who guard the nets. This would be especially true if you attached yourself to the party as a spectator rather than as a huntsman and could remain or go according to your convenience with-our leave from any of the hunters. That is a privilege sometimes granted to clerics, particularly to such as live in the woods. Nor is hunting of this sort forbidden, provided it is indulged in rarely and with moderation, and for the sake of bodily exercise rather than of dissipation. The same thing is true of the related exercises of fishing and fowling. These are the pastimes of country life.

In short, let the others be constantly in a state of restlessness and agitation, let us establish ourselves with feet firmly planted on the rock; let them be always motionless, let us make some progress; let them in their perplex-

[12] *Psalms*, cxi, 7.

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ity be always seeking counsel, let us at length carry wholesome counsel into practice; finally, let them embrace the fleeting world and cling to it as best they can, let us seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, lest when our bodies are removing from the city, our souls should remove from our bodies. Let us send our souls before us to heaven; when the time comes, (which philosophers did not hope for), we shall follow with our bodies.

Chapter 9. The glorious commendation of solitude

SEE how far the impetus has carried my pen. How much I have said about a small thing (as it may seem to most) but to my way of feeling an extremely important one, the source to me of so much satisfaction that as long as I remember to have been chained in the prison of my body, the duration of my life has seemed no greater than the space of my solitude and leisure. If I dared to take to myself the striking saying of the illustrious commander, and if the privilege of such a boast in such a disparity of reputation were not attributed to brazen impudence, I should then not be content with saying that I was never less at leisure than in my leisure, never less lonely than when alone, but I should assert that I was always at leisure except in my leisure, always lonely except when alone. Though I have no doubt, as I have often declared, that the generality will raise a great clamor against these opinions, yet the truth is fearless and unassailable and does not tremble before a vain outcry, as Maro says in describing a generous steed,

Lofty-necked, sharp-headed.[18]

I am not indeed so presumptuous as to assert this idea dogmatically: I only appear as a paintaking inquirer.

[18] *Georgics*, iii, 79-80 (Dryden's translation).

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Though I have always diligently sought for the truth, yet I fear that the recesses in which it is hidden, or my own preoccupations, or a certain dullness of mind may have sometimes stood in my way, so that often in my search for the thing I may have been bewildered by false lights. Therefore I have treated these matters not in the spirit of one who lays down the law but as a student and investigator. For to define is the province of a wise man, and I am neither wise nor neighbor to the wise, but in Cicero's words, "a man fertile in conjectures."[14] On the other hand, I know that the chosen few to whom I address myself will be on my side and they are in all respects but numbers superior and triumphant over the rest. I already have the assurance of your judgment: that is enough. If others wish to judge, let them do so at their pleasure, since there is no compulsion by which indefinite and wavering opinion can be reduced to positive truth. Surely when the inevitable day shall arrive and the ineluctable hour of death shall come to dismiss the soul from this life, when it shall profit us not to be pointed out with the finger in the squares and at crowded crossings, to have been a king or a great prelate, to have abounded in wealth and influence and enjoyments, but only to have lived chastely, piously, and innocently, then I hope that even he who now denies it will admit that our advice was at least conducive to tranquillity. So great is my love and enthusiasm for this subject that, though I have said so much, many other thoughts crowd upon me. But I must have regard to my studies.

I intended to write a letter and I have written a book. Moreover, I ought not to have divided it, since a book on the solitary life ought appropriately to be composed as an unbroken unit. But it occurred to me that I was writing in praise of the kind of solitude which, while it avoided crowds, was not averse to a limited companionship. I was also deterred from my first purpose by the consideration that an interruption in the middle of the journey rests

[14] *Academ. Prior.*, ii, 20.

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the weary and overtaxed reader, and so I divided the book in two. Differing here from the practice of the ancients whom I follow in many things, I found it grateful in this unassuming book of mine often to insert the sacred and glorious name of Christ. If this had been done by those early guides of our intellectual life, if they had added the spark of divinity to their human eloquence, though great the pleasure which they now afford, it would then have been still greater. As it is, the original source of eloquence allures us by clear brilliance of style, but it is without the true light of doctrine. It soothes the ear but it does not give repose to the mind nor lead it to that highest and securest enjoyment, that peace of the intellect to which, though wicked and headstrong men despise it, there is no approach save through the humility of Christ. These things I have addressed to you with such affection of mind that every rustle of the branches breathed upon by the wind and every ripple of the waters gushing from the ground about me seems to say a single thing: "You argue well, you counsel uprightly, you speak the truth."

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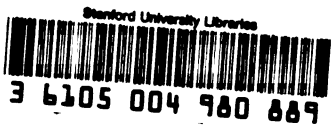

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